

HOW DID A LACK OF STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL VISION
IMPAIR THE ARMY'S ABILITY TO CONDUCT TACTICAL
OPERATIONS IN KOREA IN THE SUMMER OF 1950?

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ABSTRACT

HOW DID A LACK OF STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL VISION IMPAIR THE ARMY'S ABILITY TO CONDUCT TACTICAL OPERATIONS IN KOREA IN THE SUMMER OF 1950? by MAJ Paul J. Cook, 153 pages.

When American combat forces were first deployed to Korea in 1950 the battlefield results were generally tactical defeats. The troops that were initially deployed came from occupation duty in Japan and were not prepared for combat operations. In this thesis, the causes of tactical failure are examined. The cumulative effects of executive decisions, service department decisions, and the decisions of the operational headquarters, the Eighth United States Army, served to create the conditions for battlefield results in the summer of 1950. Drawing on a range of primary and secondary source material, this thesis examines the decisions of each of these echelons and evaluates the effects of these decisions through four case studies. These studies represent two regiments from the 24th Infantry Division, one regiment from the 25th Infantry Division and one regiment from the 1st Cavalry Division. These studies represent one-third of the regiments deployed to Korea in the initial stages of the war.

DEDICATION

The purpose of an army is to fight.

COL T. R. Fehrenbach, USAR (Retired)

The purpose of an army is to fight. A very simple idea, yet an idea that the United States did not fully grasp during the period between the end of the Second World War and the early days of the Korean War. In the span of 58 months the United States Army underwent a transformation of unprecedented proportion. Along the way, the Army changed from the world's premier land combat organization to a hollow shell. This shell possessed a thin veneer of the Army's trappings, traditions, and discipline. Beneath that veneer, however, was an institution that lacked the ability to understand its role in the post-World War II era. This inability was not confined just to the War Department or Department of the Army. At higher echelons--the Department of Defense and Presidency, this same lack of understanding was prevalent. While much was unknown about the evolving geopolitical environment, one thing was known: the Army's role would be minor and supporting. Other agencies, notably the Department of State and the US Air Force, would be major participants in policy development and implementation.

The result of this was an Army that died by inches each day. By the time it was clear that the Army was needed, it was too late. The damage had been done, and the Army had to try and make do with what it had. In Korea, in the summer of 1950, there were instances of great courage and heroism by soldiers of all ranks. There was also spectacular failure, again by soldiers of all ranks.

It is not my place to judge those who led or failed to lead, fought or failed to fight. It is, however, my place to look at the circumstances that surrounded their respective conditions at the start of hostilities.

Historically the American soldier has been as good as we, the institution, have let him be. Inversely, he has also been as poor as we, the institution, have let him be. Given that, there is a clear need for the institution to recognize that responsibility and to maintain a clear and accurate understanding how good (or bad) we actually are at any given point in time. The failure of the institution to do this means that bills must be paid. Regrettably for us, when the bill is due, it is due in the lives and suffering of our soldiers.

It is, therefore, to those soldiers who suffered and who learned the essence of soldiering in the high hills and fetid valleys of Korea in July and August 1950 that this work is dedicated.

The motto of the Eighth United States Army is "*Pacific Victors.*" Through the suffering of this small group of soldiers, the Eighth Army was able to retain that motto.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
THESIS APPROVAL PAGE	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION	iv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW	1
2. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS	23
3. DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY DECISIONS	56
4. THE EIGHTH US ARMY IN JAPAN	81
5. THE EIGHTH US ARMY IN KOREA	105
6. CONCLUSIONS	136
BIBLIOGRAPHY	143
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	151
CERTIFICATION FOR MMAS DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT	152

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

How did a lack of strategic and operational vision impair the Army's ability to conduct tactical operations in Korea? In the summer of 1950, many were asking this same question in an effort to try and understand the Army's performance against the North Korean People's Army (NKPA).

On 24 June 1950 the United States was a nation at peace with the bulk of its small Army performing occupation duties in Japan, Germany, and Austria. On 25 June the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, North Korea, launched a combined arms attack across the border dividing North Korea from its southern neighbor.

This attack was paradoxically both anticipated and unexpected. There had been tensions between the two Koreas ever since the US and Soviet Union attempted to establish some kind of government over the peninsula following their combined occupation of the peninsula at the end of World War II.¹ In a mirror of events unfolding in Europe, the two former allies were able to occupy territory, but were unable to successfully coordinate their economic or government policies. This inability to develop uniform policies served to further break down the already chaotic political situation on the peninsula. Ultimately, two power centers developed around the occupying powers, with each taking measures to eliminate rivals. As a result of this foundation, two rival states emerged from military occupation.

The attack was anticipated because mutual mistrust and suspicion between the two countries led the US to provide both equipment and a military training mission tasked with creating a South Korean army, capable of both defeating an ongoing guerrilla

insurgency and an attack from its rival on the peninsula.² Thus, there existed within both the US and Republic of Korea governments an expectation that at some point military force might be used to safeguard the integrity of the Republic of Korea (ROK). In the eyes of the American government, this force would be Korean. The so-called Truman doctrine and the nation's recently declared security perimeter, which explicitly excluded the ROK, both made it clear that the ROK was responsible for its own defense.³

To provide the material means of ensuring the survival of the ROK government, the United States provided a range of weapons and other materials. This assistance included small arms and light artillery.⁴ Conspicuously absent from the material provided were tanks, long-range artillery, and combat aircraft. Fears of a South Korean invasion of the north and of the subsequent impact on political stability in northeast Asia served to place sharp limits on the quality and quantity of weapons the United States provided.⁵ These limitations in armament seriously handicapped the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) by ensuring that it would be outgunned, both in effects and in range, in any conflict with its northern neighbor.⁶

This attack was unexpected in that neither the United States nor the ROK considered the possibility of an attack of such magnitude at such a time. Intelligence estimates frequently commented on the possibility of communist action against the ROK. On 23 May an estimate stated, "Hostilities may occur at any time in Korea."⁷ A report issued shortly after that, however, served to muddy the waters by stating that, although there had been indications of troop movement by the North Koreans, "no conclusions can be drawn from these indications."⁸ The result of such vague statements was the continuing practice of minimal manning of forward positions over weekends. Indeed, the

North Korean decision to initiate the attack on Sunday, 25 June, was made because of the assumption that security would be lax on that date.⁹ This reduced level of security would magnify the benefits of surprise by allowing the North Koreans to attack smaller and less well-prepared forces. Caught off guard with a high percentage of its combat troops on leave or pass, the ROKA found itself in disarray and unable to mount an effective defense against the attacking NKPA for any length of time.¹⁰

The effect of the attack was the deployment of US forces to the Korean peninsula under conditions markedly similar to a “small-scale contingency” in today’s lexicon. This “contingency” found the US Air Force conducting coalition operations--with mixed success--over Korea.¹¹ The attack and the success of the North Koreans served to radically change the nature of America’s “security perimeter.” Realizing that the fall of a US-sponsored government would affect American prestige throughout Asia, President Truman reversed his stated policy of an off-shore security perimeter and authorized the deployment of ground troops to aid the faltering ROKA. By the end of the week, the first combat elements of the Eighth US Army would be committed to fighting in Korea.

Beginning with the arrival of an understrength battalion and ending with the employment of three divisions from Japan, a division from the United States, a Regimental Combat Team from Okinawa, a Regimental Combat Team from Hawaii, and three separate infantry battalions, the US Army experienced repeated tactical failures as it first sought to delay, then stop, the NKPA in its efforts to reach the port city of Pusan.¹²

During the seventy-two days that spanned the first delaying action at Osan-Ni and the successful landings at Inchon (Operation Chromite), the Army would see the loss of a division commander, significant changes in the leadership of infantry regiments and

battalions (due to reliefs, battle casualties, and nonbattle casualties), and the disturbing loss of key pieces of tactical equipment--to include tanks and cannon.¹³ Throughout this period, a frequently asked question was, Why? Why was the Army forced to abandon so many positions? Why was equipment not available? Why was the casualty rate so high? Why was the cost of what was termed a “police action” so high?

At the time, there were no clear answers. A combination of institutional embarrassment within the Army, national pride within the general public, and the fact that the war would remain an ongoing fixture through the remainder of the Truman presidency would serve to delay answering that question.

Today, the answer is a bit more clear, but still not fully understood by those whose business it is to fund, train, and lead the Army. It is equally important that those who make the decision as to when and where the Army will be committed must also fully understand both the question and the answer and of greater import, the answer’s meaning. When the key decision makers do not understand the questions, answers, or the answers impact, the service is again placed at risk. The Army, as an institution, is imperiled when it is improperly prepared or applied in support of attaining the nation’s objectives.

To answer the primary question, How a lack of strategic and operational vision impaired the Army’s ability to conduct tactical operations? it is necessary to ask and answer several subordinate questions. These include determining the effects of inadequately funding the Army, the effects of not clearly articulating the Army’s role in the nuclear age, the effects of dedicating a large share of the Army to nontactical roles, the results of radical changes in force structure, and the risks that stem from the “overnight” creation of combat units.

In considering these questions, it is also important to recognize that Korea was a chance occurrence. The Army could just as easily have found itself conducting combat operations in Europe, Taiwan, or Japan. The nation's emergency war plan "Off Tackle" was based on fighting a small-scale delay in Europe while attempting to retain control of Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines to support their use as launch, recovery, or maintenance points to support heavy-bombardment air strikes against the Soviet Union. In the Pacific Theater the Army's role in this plan was essentially limited to security operations pending the conclusion of the aerial bombardment, mobilization (Operation Cogwheel), and the establishment of occupation forces where required.¹⁴ Had the envisioned war against the Soviet Union come, it is unlikely that the Army's performance would have been markedly different. The problems the Army experienced were not "Korean" problems; they were essentially institutional problems that merely presented themselves in Korea.

The primary assumption is that soldiers, both individually and collectively, are as good as the Army (the institution) is willing to make them. Historically, the American soldier has done an excellent job when provided with "suitable doctrine and training, appropriate equipment and intelligent leadership."¹⁵ Given that, soldier failure must (with few exceptions) stem from something other than the failure of the individual soldier. This, in turn, forms the foundation of the basic thesis question: How did a lack of strategic and operational vision impair the Army's ability to conduct tactical operations? In answering this question, a number of decisions made by the Truman administration and the Department of the Army will be assessed. Decisions made by the Army's Far East Command and the Eighth US Army will also be considered. Finally, some tactical

decisions made on the ground in Korea during the summer of 1950 will also be considered. In assessing these decisions and their battlefield effects, the research will demonstrate that, while the soldier bears some responsibility for his performance, a great deal of the responsibility actually rests much further up the chain of command--primarily with poor decisions stemming from a lack of any real vision as to the true purpose of the Army.

The answer to this thesis question is relevant as the Army is once again in an era where its proper place in military operations is frequently called into question.

Limitations and Assumptions

This thesis considers three major government entities and how their decisions affected the Army in Korea. In examining the underlying considerations and decisions of these entities, it is periodically required to refer to either the 79th or 80th Congress. The interaction between administration members and these congresses is beyond the scope of this thesis. As this thesis involves examining both witness testimony and military appropriations, it is necessary to periodically refer to the Congress. Where this is required, either the testimony or the final results will be examined; the conduct of the Congress' business will not.

As President Harry S. Truman played a key role in setting the conditions that led to the issue under examination, it is necessary to examine key events in his professional background that directly affected his perceptions of both the Army and the requirements of economic policy. Beyond this examination, the thesis is limited to the period of May 1945 through 15 September 1950. During this period key decisions were made and their effects presented on the battlefield.

Finally, one of the most unpleasant episodes in the early history of the Department of Defense will not be scrutinized. The so-called “Admirals Revolt” occurred over the administration’s decision to invest heavily in strategic bombers at the expense of naval and carrier aviation as part of a new national military strategy. The strategy of air-delivered nuclear weapons must be examined because of its impact on the Army during the immediate post-World War II period. This examination will focus on the final form of the strategy, and not the divergent paths and concerns that were traveled and revealed by the Navy or its political allies in developing the strategy.

A perhaps unique assumption of this thesis is that the Army experienced significant tactical failure. It can be argued that the Army, in concert with the ROKA, the British Army, the Royal Australian Air Force, and a great deal of assistance from the United States Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps, achieved an operational victory in spite of its failures. It is recognized that the Army, operating as part of a joint and combined force, successfully held the Pusan perimeter and prevented the NKPA from seizing all of Korea. It accomplished this task, however, at an extremely high cost--both in human and equipment terms. The operational outcome notwithstanding, the unpleasant reality is that the shattering of the 19th, 21st, and 34th Infantry Regiments of the 24th Infantry Division and the lackluster performance of virtually every other maneuver regiment in Korea during this period (the 9th and 27th Infantry Regiments recognized as exceptions to this characterization) can only be accurately described as tactical failure.

Thesis Organization

The thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction and provides the historical setting of the question under discussion. It also includes a partial review of the literature supporting research of the question. Chapter 2 deals with executive- and national-level decisions and the resultant actions. Key to understanding the events of the summer of 1950 is an understanding of how the Truman administration desired to shape the nation's post-World War II economy. Truman's objectives in this sphere profoundly affected the services in general and the Army in particular. Chapter 2 also examines the evolution of the Soviet Union as a threat and the rise of the Truman doctrine as a means to containing that threat. Finally, it addresses the development of the nation's aerial-delivered nuclear deterrent. These three subjects must be considered individually and cumulatively, as they served to shape the foundation on which the post-World War II era Army was built. Chapter 3, "Department of the Army Plans and Policies," will examine manning (distribution of personnel) and training issues. Budget issues must, of necessity, be touched upon. The reality of the War Department and Department of the Army budgets during the immediate post-World War II is that the Army had little discretion in spending its appropriation. In today's terms, the money was "colored" by Congress, and the service had few options in spending it once it was appropriated. Chapter 4 examines the Army's Far East Command and Eighth US Army personnel and training plans, policy and guidance from 1947 through the start of the Korean War. This will focus on unit specifics as they pertain to the 24th and 25th Infantry and 1st Cavalry Divisions.

Chapters 1 through 4 provide the requisite background for understanding chapter 5. This chapter will address the decisions and actions of the Eighth Army and its subordinate units upon its arrival in Korea. It will also include specific examples of tactical failure in Korea through the initial engagements of four infantry regiments and will demonstrate the linkages that exist between the decisions of the highest levels of government, intermediate levels of the chain of command, and the effects of tactical decision makers on the Army's performance. It is in this chapter that the effects of poor decision making at all echelons will be most clearly illustrated and examined. Chapter 6 will consist of the final conclusions that stem from the research conducted to prepare the previous chapters. It will take those conclusions and use them to draw some that are relevant to today's Army. This chapter will demonstrate that today's policy makers face many of the same decisions their predecessors faced and that making the wrong decisions in peacetime can have debilitating effects on combat operations--especially early on.

Literature Review

In general terms, the literature falls into three basic categories: that published between the start of the war and 1963 (roughly corresponding to the point where the Army's increasing role in Viet Nam assumes greater visibility with the American public), that published during the period 1963 to 1979, and that which has been published since 1980. It is perhaps most logical to consider the primary source data before any commentary on the literature. Devoid of historical commentary, much of the primary source data is simply the factual condition of the Department of Defense in general and the Department of the Army. These data are found in several works, most notably *The Public Papers of the President, Harry S. Truman, 1945*; *The Military Establishment*

Appropriation Bill for 1947, The First Report of the Secretary of Defense; Annual Report of the Secretary of the Army, 1949; Semi-Annual Report of the Secretaries of Defense, Army, Navy and Air Force, 1950 (Period Covered July 1, 1949-December 31, 1949); and Historical Tables, Budget of the United States Government. An initial review of these data shows several alarming trends--the most notable being the fixation on cutting the costs of the Army while still giving it significant responsibilities in civil affairs and military government activities in Japan; the Ryukyus Islands; Germany; Austria; and Trieste, Italy. The second trend evidenced is the ongoing fixation with the concept of “unification”--the creation of the Department of Defense to assume the cabinet responsibilities formerly held by the War and Navy Departments. The debates associated with two newly created agencies, the Department of Defense and the Department of the Air Force, reinforced the unpleasant fact that worrying about the Army’s combat capabilities was a low priority. A marked absence from all of these works is any discussion of the nation’s basic military strategy of the period: deterrence of major war by virtue of the nation’s nuclear monopoly.

In making the assumption that the Army’s basic problems existed before the Korean War and were manifested by accident of history, these data will provide the baseline data that will drive assessments as to the Army’s organization, perceived missions, leadership, and training.

An additional primary source is *General Dean’s Story*. A first person narrative, Dean recounts his experiences as the commanding general of the 24th Infantry Division. Captured while leading a bazooka team at Taejon, Dean’s experience is a case study in

tactical failure and unit performance in the absence of leadership and command and control.

Useful for purposes of illustration and of providing some limited primary source data, Dean's work is silent on the underlying causes of failure that are the heart of the question under discussion. This is a tragic failure, as Dean and General Walton Walker were the two general officers grappling with the effects of tactical failure during the critical months of July and August. While Dean is clear in articulating events, the absence of any candid expressions of the underlying causes of those events is a major drawback of this work.

In terms of secondary source material, the initial period provides some of the best material for basic information. Included in this period are such works as the first three volumes of the Department of the Army's official history of the war, Russell Guegler's *Combat Actions in Korea* and T. R. Fehrenbach's *This Kind of War: A Study In Unpreparedness*. All of these works are candid in articulating examples of the problems the Army faced at its most basic level--the tactical level. They also provide varying degrees of insight into the underlying causes of those problems.

The Army's official history of the war is found in several volumes. The first of these to appear, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, provides a great deal of insight into the basic problem under discussion by illustrating *what* failed. Authored by one of the more-prolific writers on the Korean War Roy E. Appleman, this work represents the Army's first official attempt to examine the first few months of the war.

Appleman includes a cogent laydown of the relative strengths of the North Korean and American forces. This laydown goes beyond simple numerical comparisons

of troops or artillery--it also includes some of the “intangibles” that affect an army’s ability to successfully wage combat. These include training, leadership, discipline, and combat experience. Appleman demonstrates that in all of these areas, the United States Army was markedly inferior to its North Korean counterpart.

Appleman makes it very clear that in terms of training, the Army was almost completely unprepared for war. A significant weakness in *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* is the lack of detail in explaining why training was at such a low state. Superficial explanations are provided (lack of training areas and the duties of occupation), but these explanations do not consider the effects of Department of the Army and Department of Defense plans and policies and their effect on tactical units. Appleman’s broad-brush explanations fail to address specific causes and responsibilities.

Left relatively untouched by Appleman, the effects of small unit personnel turbulence must be examined and placed in context. While Appleman touches on the wholesale transfer of noncommissioned officers from across the Army to early deploying units, he does not provide a great deal of information on the effects of such transfers on the Army’s ability to exercise command and control at the platoon and company level. In the highly compartmented terrain that comprises so much of Korea, this had a significant effect on tactical operations.

Originally published in 1952, Russell Gugeler’s *Combat Actions in Korea* was an Army publication designed to impart lessons learned to replacement leaders and soldiers deploying to Korea. For research purposes, it has some utility in that it addresses two significant weaknesses in the units that first deployed to Korea: a lack of orientation and poor leadership. It provides little direct information for answering the question at hand,

but does provide a valuable frame of reference for evaluating data by providing an honest recounting of early battlefield events. Additionally, it provides “end states” for some of the problems under examination.

First published in 1963, *This Kind of War: A Study in Un-preparedness* identifies the fundamental problems gripping the Army, to include their causes and the Army’s difficulties in implementing solutions to the problems that can be described as “self-inflicted.” Fehrenbach is also the first author to recognize that many of the Army’s problems stemmed from immediate post-World War II decisions. These decisions (the mission of the force, manning the force, equipping the force, and disciplining the force) played a large role in shaping the Army as it was initially committed to combat in Korea.

Fehrenbach, however, possesses a distinct bias that is apparent in his writing. Like several other early authors, Fehrenbach was a reserve officer recalled to service for the Korean War. As an armor officer, he saw the war from both the tank turret and command post. This first-hand experience with Korea gives him a perspective that other authors lack. While it is clear that Fehrenbach holds the individual soldier in great respect, it is equally clear that his opinion changes when the term “senior leader” is substituted for “individual soldier.” Fehrenbach is the first to argue in a commercial publication that the service’s senior leadership--uniformed and civilian--sowed the seeds for failure in any theater long before the first soldiers of the 21st Infantry Regiment were placed in shallow holes along the Osan-P’yong’taek highway.

Given this perspective, *This Kind of War* provides an excellent point of departure and provides a range of illustrative vignettes to describe the problems the Army faced. To complete the thesis, however, deeper investigation into the underlying causes of the

problems is required--most notably the ambiguity as to the Army's basic role in the nuclear age, as well as the real and perceived effects of the so-called Doolittle Boards into discipline in the Army.

With the arrival of the mid-1960s, the nation's focus began to shift towards Viet Nam. Coincidental with this shift, there was a decline in literature addressing Korea. Several books on Korea would be written during this period, and some would be of dubious value. Three books, however, stand out in terms of utility for research purposes.

General J. Lawton Collins' *War in Peacetime* was published in 1969. As the Army's Chief of Staff during the period from 1949 to 1953, Collins was the Army's senior officer--and the one who bears much of the responsibility for what happened in Korea. In *War in Peacetime*, Collins attempts to explain the events that affected the Army in strategic and operational terms. This is fortunate for the simple reason that many of the Army's tactical problems were based on poor strategic and operational decisions made prior to the decision to commit combat troops to Korea.

Collins is the first to raise questions of funding and its effect on the Army. It could be argued that this is an attempt to explain the Army's initial failures as a direct outgrowth of poor funding. Historically, however, the Army has suffered from poor funding through much of its history. Despite this, it had always been able to develop the leadership, both officer and noncommissioned, necessary to fight effectively.

Collins also spends a great deal of time on the vague intelligence picture that existed in Europe and Asia, in general, and Korea, in particular. The inference is that with better funding and better intelligence, the initial commitment of troops might have

been different and that follow-on engagements (Kum River, Taejon, and Naktong River) would have developed differently.

The US Army in the Korean War, Policy and Direction: The First Year by James Schnabel is the second volume in the Army's official history of its participation in Korea. Schnabel, a retired Army officer who spent most of his career as an official historian, focuses on the operational and strategic conditions and decisions that affected the war during the period June 1950 through June 1951. Because of this, his work is perhaps the best single secondary source for developing an answer to the basic question of the Army's failure.

Among the issues Schnabel examines are the developing NATO alliance and its impact on resource allocation, the demands of occupation forces, and the state of training of the Eighth US Army in Japan. Where Collins provides some insight into these issues, Schnabel provides greater detail and clarity by expressing issues in simple terms.

Schnabel makes it clear that any initial commitment of soldiers without adequate equipment, training, discipline, or spirit would be problematic for the Army. Of equal importance, he draws extensively on primary source documents to develop his observations. In so doing, he provides the best recounting to date of the basic problems and the underlying causes for them. As such, *Policy and Direction* represents the single best piece of scholarship bearing on the question at hand.

Thunder of the Captains, by David Detzer, provides the last quality piece of literature during the 1964 to 1979 period. Together with *Policy and Direction*, from which it draws heavily, this work provides some of the best treatment of the problems facing the Army on the eve of hostilities in Korea.

Detzer's benefit comes from his taking a look at the range of issues facing the Army as an institution before considering tactical issues--the same basic approach that will be applied in this thesis. Among the issues he considers is the way the defense establishment's senior civilian leaders viewed both the operating environment and role for the Army. In providing some insight into the service's higher-level perceptions, it becomes easier to trace some of the fundamental problems from their origin to presentation on the battlefield. These problems included budgeting and equipment issues. Perhaps more important, however, are the manpower issues. Detzer identifies the problems of manpower, both in quantity and quality that combat units in the Army's Far East Command faced. In *Combat Actions in Korea*, Gugeler addresses problems with soldier orientation. In *Thunder of the Captains*, Detzer addresses the basic reason why those problems existed.

Confirmation of Detzer is provided to some degree in "War in Korea: The Desperate Times." Appearing in *American History Illustrated*, Robert Maddox's article attempts to cover the key battles of Osan (Task Force Smith), the Kum River, Taejon, and the Pusan Perimeter. A short piece, Maddox's article provides an almost standard synopsis of events with almost no interpretation. Its utility comes from the one point he emphasizes--the high rank of battle casualties. Maddox points out for the first time since the Civil War, senior leaders were forced to actually exercise command and control with their most-forward units. Command post leadership was simply not effective. Officers had to be on the line to exercise any influence over events. This sudden requirement was in large measure responsible for the tremendous senior leadership turnover in the 24th Infantry Division after its arrival in Korea.

With the thirtieth anniversary of the start of the Korean War in 1980, a renaissance of Korean War study began. This renaissance included an increase in both the number and quality of books and articles about the war.

“America’s Reluctant Crusade: Truman’s Commitment of US Combat Troops in the Korean War” by James Matray was one of the first works of this renaissance. In this article, Matray argues that while there was some divergence as to the specifics of force structure, the senior leadership of the defense establishment was in general agreement that the primary weapons would be the heavy bomber and the nuclear bomb. The Air Force would represent the primary means of deterrence and, if necessary, combat, with the other services being employed in supporting roles. Budget allocations would be made consistent with these roles. As the 1940s drew to a close, the Defense Department became increasingly aware that an overreliance on nuclear options could prove detrimental to the nation’s interests over a protracted cold war. Essentially, the nation’s basic military strategy gave the nation the ability to fight only a total war, using aerial delivered nuclear weapons, without any real ability to fight more limited contests. The dawning realization of this fact was the impetus for a revised national military strategy that came to be described in National Security Council Memorandum 68 (NSC 68). This memorandum would seek to correct the balance in forces by allowing for a defense structure capable of a range of operations. Unfortunately for the Army, NSC 68 came too late for Korea.

Another useful piece of the renaissance period is Joseph Goulden’s *Korea, The Untold Story of the War*. At times tedious, Goulden is able to provide some explanations for tactical failures--generally attributable to manning and training decisions. A graphic

example of this is the recounting of an emergency personnel program: Operation Flushout. Flushout, as the name implied, was designed to “flush” soldiers from headquarters, special duty, and confinement assignments in an effort to bring combat units up to their full personnel strength. The program provided soldiers, but the benefits did not match the numbers, as many of these men either lacked proficiency in their basic infantry skills (the result of extended periods of special or headquarters duty) or the discipline needed to be effective (the result of releasing soldiers from confinement). Goulden also addresses some of the problems associated with small unit leadership. Unlike most authors, however, he focuses his examination on a single regiment, in this case, the 24th Infantry. The 24th represented something of a special case in that it was a controversial unit (the Army’s last segregated regiment) in a controversial war. This focus on a single unit is beneficial in that it provides a counterpoise to those works that have keyed on the 19th, 21st, and 34th Regiments of the 24th Division.

Bevin Alexander’s *Korea: The First War We Lost* represents something of a contrary view to the war. As the title indicates, Alexander’s premise is that the effort in Korea was, in the final analysis, a failure.

In terms of trying to resolve the thesis question, Alexander’s greatest contribution lies in explaining how the parsimoniousness of the Truman administration really set the conditions for initial failure in Korea. In linking budget impacts on manning and training a reduced Regular Army and underfunded Reserve Components (National Guard and Organized Reserve Corps), Alexander illustrates that the Army’s manpower problems went beyond simple numbers of soldiers; they included the problems inherent in training those soldiers. While the Army possessed the ability to

design new equipment, it lacked the ability to procure it. This left units with worn-out and obsolete equipment items for training and combat use. Reduced to its simplest terms, Alexander provides a clear link between the decisions of the Truman Defense Department and the effects of those decisions on the soldiers who ultimately carry out the Army's business.

Perhaps the best work of this period is Clay Blair's *The Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950-1953*. Blair is one of the few writers of the post-Viet Nam period to seriously examine the underlying policy decisions that shaped the Army's options in Korea. Essentially, Blair paints a picture of a Defense Department that is focused on economics at the expense of a rational, balanced approach to national military strategy.

Blair explores this lack of credible leadership and links it to a number of decisions that really led to the tactical problems with which the Army had to contend. Among the leadership problems identified is an underlying perception that the service's uniformed leadership was incapable of accurately determining real requirements. As a result, the legitimate needs of the service tended to be discounted by civilian leaders whose overarching consideration was paring defense appropriations down to the lowest possible level to meet the president's guidance. This approach served as an obstacle to developing an Army that would be capable of conducting tactical operations on short notice.

Blair's criticism does not stop at the national level. He is also critical of assignment policies within the Army's Far East Command and the Eighth US Army. Among these decisions was manning headquarters at 100 percent strength while combat units remained understrength and then stripping headquarters and combat service support units to fill tables of authorization once those units were alerted for deployment. The

effect of this was to create an Army of ad hoc organizations. Finally, Blair considers the Eighth US Army's training plans--and its inability to meet its own training objectives. Taken together, these decisions call into question the competence and effectiveness of the Army's senior leadership in Japan.

A different approach is taken in Major Michael Cannon's "Task Force Smith: A Study in (Un)Preparedness and (Ir)Responsibility." Published in *Military Review*, Cannon argues that the Army's initial problems in Korea were created from the bottom up, not the top down. Recognizing the shortages of manpower and equipment, Cannon argues that these were secondary causes. The primary cause was found in units themselves. By failing to train properly, by failing to develop esprit, and by failing to develop the physical and mental conditioning required to fight, the companies and battalions of the Eighth US Army set themselves up for failure long before the first airplane or ship landed in Korea.

James A. Huston's work *Guns and Butter, Powder and Rice* is an excellent source in considering the effects of the budget on the Army's operations. While Huston is concerned primarily with operations in Korea after hostilities started, he does provide a well-documented laydown of the state of the Army's logistics posture prior to the war. While much of the background data is drawn from Appleman and Schnabel (a common practice among historians considering Korea), Huston also draws from a range of other sources, to include Congress' own records, the diaries of then Secretary of Defense James Forrestal, and reports and diaries from the Army's Far East Command and Eighth Army.

Finally, Brigadier General Uzal Ent's *Fighting on the Brink: The Pusan Perimeter* needs to be considered. While much of the previous literature is built on the

incorporation of Fehrenbach, Appleman, and Schnabel, Ent attempts to create a newer version of events by drawing heavily on the memories of participants. As a result, there are some places where Ent's version of events is somewhat different than the version presented by his predecessors, particularly events associated with the performance of the 24th Infantry Division's 34th Infantry Regiment. Much of this can be attributed to Ent basing his interpretations on the memories of men whose experiences are over fifty years old, and who, in some cases, must of necessity alter their memories to compensate for a period of substandard performance.

The weaknesses of human memory notwithstanding, *Fighting on the Brink* is nonetheless a valuable resource in that it provides a great deal of detail regarding the personnel changes within the Eighth Army, both in Japan before its deployment and in Korea as a response to combat with the NKPA.

Even this brief survey makes it clear that it is not possible to attribute the initial failure of the Army in the summer of 1950 to a single cause. The literature does, however, tend to illustrate several recurring themes which will provide the credible foundation for this thesis.

¹Um Sub Il, ed., *The Korean War* (Seoul: Korea Institute for Military History, 1998), 13-21; and Carter J. Eckert, Ki-baik Lee, Young Ick Lew, Michael Robinson, and Edward W. Wagner, *Korea Old and New: A History* (Seoul: Ilchokak Publishers, 1990), 339-341.

²T. R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War: A Study in Unpreparedness*, 2d ed. (Dulles: Brasseys, 1998), 5.

³Harry S. Truman, *The Public Papers of the President, 1947* (Washington, DC: The National Archives, 1963), 176; Thomas H. Etzold and John L. Gaddis, eds., *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 49; and Callum A. MacDonald, *Korea: The War Before Viet Nam* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 22.

⁴Roy E. Appleman, *The US Army in the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1961), 12-17.

⁵Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War* (New York: Times Books, 1987), 45.

⁶Um Sub II, Tables 11 and 22.

⁷James F. Schnabel, *The US Army in the Korean War, Policy and Direction: The First Year* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1972), 63-64.

⁸*Ibid.*, 64.

⁹Um Sub II, 111.

¹⁰Paik Yun Sup, *From Pusan to Panmunjom: Wartime Memoirs of the Republic of Korea's First Four-Star General*, 1st paperback ed. (Dulles: Brasseys, 1999), 4-15.

¹¹Robert F. Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea, 1950-1953* (Washington, DC: Department of the Air Force, 1983), 8; and Robert O'Neil, *Australia in the Korean War, 1950-1953*, vol. 1 (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1981), 499.

¹²Um Sub II, 116.

¹³Blair, 109-15, 128, 132-133; Simon Dunston, *Ambush of the Korean War* (London: Osprey, 1982), 5; BG Uzal Ent (PA ARNG, RET), *Fighting on the Brink: The Pusan Perimeter* (Paducah: Turner Publishing, 1996), 61; Fehrenbach, 68-71, 82; and Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 15, 348.

¹⁴Department of the Army, *Final Report: War Department Policies and Programs Review Board, 1 August 1947* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1947), 72.

¹⁵Charles E. Heller and William A. Stofft, *America's First Battles: 1776-1965* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1986), 108.

CHAPTER 2

EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

As executive level decisions (defined as those made either by the president or by the Congress in accordance with the president's requests) determined the Army's battlefield performance in the summer of 1950, it is necessary to examine these decisions and the forces that shaped them. In so doing, it will become clear how fiscal policy and strategy ultimately led to the marked decline in the Army's tactical capabilities during the period 1946 to 1950.

To understand these decisions, it is first necessary to understand the overall security environment. The security environment during the immediate post-World War II period was dynamic. Fears of government spending serving as a brake on the civilian economy, an evolving Soviet-inspired communist threat, and an ongoing debate as to the roles of airpower and nuclear weapons served as the three primary forces that shaped that environment. All of these had to be considered against President Truman's end state: an extended period of peace that included a high level of prosperity for the American people.¹

For President Harry Truman, there was only one sound fiscal policy: the federal government must operate with a balanced budget.² Congress would pass the government's appropriations, but they would be passed in accordance with the President's plans. There could be no deficit spending if the economy was going to successfully transition from a wartime-boom economy to a peacetime economy. The challenge this posed was magnified by the need to pay off a war debt whose principal stood at \$194 billion at war's end.³

Starting with the fiscal year 1947 budget, the Truman administration would try to fund the armed services at the lowest possible levels. These levels would be defined by administration assessments of what the economy would support, not on any requirements or contingency plans developed by the services.⁴ For the Army, the administration's priorities of transitioning government spending to a peacetime economy would significantly affect structure, roles, and capabilities through the first weeks of the Korean War.⁵

The end of the Second World War represented both opportunity and risk for the Truman administration. The opportunity existed in successfully transitioning the wartime economy to a peacetime economy with the manufacturing sector meeting demands for consumer goods. The risk existed in the rapid demobilization of the nation's military and industrial might and the effects of millions of workers finding themselves suddenly unemployed.⁶ To minimize the risk and capitalize on the opportunity, Truman unveiled a twenty-one-point reconversion plan to the Congress in September 1945.

In preparing his plan, Truman drew on his own experiences following the First World War--and the economic fallout that followed. Right or wrong, Truman believed that the wrong government economic policies could be crippling to the postwar economy. In articulating his plan to Congress, Truman made his position very clear:

We must keep in mind the experience of the period immediately following the First World War. After a lull of a few months following the Armistice of 1918, prices turned upward, scrambling for inventories started and prices soon got completely out of hand. We found ourselves in one of the worst inflations of our history, culminating with the crash of 1920 and the disastrous deflation of 1920 and 1921. We must be sure this time not to repeat the bitter mistake. . . . [We] must be in a position to overcome that danger if we expect to achieve an orderly transition to peacetime levels of full production and full employment.⁷

Part of this twenty-one-point plan included the swift cancellation and settlement of as many war-production contracts as possible.⁸ Translating his plan into action, Truman sent the first recision to the service budgets to Congress on 25 September. This recision called for a reduction of approximately \$28.7 billion from an initial allocation of \$70 billion.⁹ This action would be the first in a series of budget decisions that would contribute to the ineffective Army of June 1950.

The effects of President Truman's budget recision request transcended the dollar amount. On 30 June 1945 the Army's active strength was 5,984,114 soldiers (including the Army Air Forces).¹⁰ The Army Ground Forces component of this strength was organized into ninety-one divisions deployed throughout Europe, the China-Burma-India theater, the Pacific, Alaska, and the Canal Zone.¹¹ Additionally, there were support troops in Africa and the Middle East. Exactly one year later, the Army's active strength had fallen to 1,143,174, with ten divisions remaining on active duty.¹² This was a reduction of 81 percent of the Army's strength. In practical terms, this meant the Army spent fiscal year 1946 engaged in three tasks: establishing military occupation of Germany, Austria, Japan, and Korea; maintaining a division in Italy to respond to tensions stemming from Yugoslav claims to Trieste; and demobilizing.¹³ The maintenance of effective combat formations beyond Trieste was not possible as experienced soldiers were rapidly separated from active duty.

If fiscal year 1946 and its sudden budget recision represented a bad year for the Armed Services, 1947 was worse. Truman believed deeply in his reconversion plan and in the need to keep government spending at the lowest level possible. Within the

government budget, Truman also believed that the military budget should be as small as possible--for several reasons.

First, Truman was the first Reserve Component officer (he ultimately retired as a colonel in the Field Artillery, Organized Reserve Corps) to become president since Theodore Roosevelt. As a National Guard officer, Truman served in France with the 35th Division during the First World War. He came away from the experience with a generally low opinion of Regular Army officers and of their abilities to determine actual fiscal requirements. Among some of his more notable observations:

“No military man knows anything at all about money. All they know is how to spend it, and they don’t give a damn whether or not they are getting their money’s worth” and (referring to Regular Army officers) he would “not trust ‘em with a pair of mules or surplus cash because they would either lose the mules or sell them and use the money to buy whiskey.”¹⁴

Secondly, his basic observations of military fiscal incompetence were the baseline for his work as the chairman of a Senate subcommittee he established to identify and eliminate fraud, waste, and duplication in military procurement during the Second World War.¹⁵ The Senate Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program gave then Senator Truman the opportunity to investigate the fiscal activities of the national military establishment during the period 1941 through 1944.¹⁶ In one instance, the construction of military camps, Truman’s work identified problems that ultimately saved the government \$250 million.¹⁷ Throughout the war, Truman’s committee would delve into the corners of military contracting in an ongoing effort to ensure the armed services did not needlessly waste the funds entrusted to them. By war’s end, estimates of the government’s savings stemming from Truman’s committee reached \$15 billion.¹⁸ That he was able to find waste and duplication on such a scale only served to reinforce

Truman's attitudes towards the military services' inability to manage their funds and would serve as the underlying basis for his method of establishing military budgets through fiscal year 1951.

Finally, Truman was himself a victim of the economic turmoil of the early 1920s. Returning from France, he opened a small haberdashery that survived until 1922. When it failed as a result of the deflation of 1921, Truman opted not to declare bankruptcy, but to clear the business' debts over time. The decision would strain Truman financially for the next twenty years. It was a bitter and ongoing lesson in the need for the government to exercise fiscal restraint that Truman would remember through the opening of the Korean War.¹⁹ For better or worse, the experiences of his service in France and as a Senator, and his failed venture into commercial enterprise had forever etched Truman's fiscal judgment. For the Army, that judgment would have devastating effects.

In preparing the fiscal year 1947 budget, Truman's guidance included allocating no more than one-third of the estimated total government income to the War and Navy Departments.²⁰ To further ensure that military appropriations remained in check, Truman adopted the "remainder method" of setting the final recommended appropriation. In this method, the requirements for the other functions of government were subtracted from the forecast budget ceiling. What was left became the recommended military appropriation.²¹ The effect of this was to set an artificial ceiling on the military budget that was linked to revenues, not requirements. The contingency plans, manpower and equipment requirements, or any other military considerations were considered only after the appropriation was determined. The initial effects of this "top down" approach to budgeting the War and Navy Departments would be presented through fiscal years 1947

and 1948. Despite the inherent problems associated with this approach to developing a military appropriations budget, it would serve as the basis of allocating funds through the outbreak of the Korean War.

The fiscal year 1947 budget for the War and Navy Departments was \$14 billion.²² Of this amount, the Army was allocated approximately \$7.26 billion.²³ This amount was not sufficient to meet even the minimum requirements identified by the Army. With this amount, the Army had to sustain over 683,000 soldiers;²⁴ maintain an occupation force in four countries (Korea, Japan, Germany, and Austria); maintain a regimental combat team-sized force in Trieste, Italy; provide forces in Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Canal Zone; maintain the Army Air Forces; and, perform its traditional Corps of Engineer, National Guard funding and oversight, support to civilian marksmanship, and other responsibilities in the United States. Additionally, it had to maintain some \$9 billion worth of equipment--virtually all of it received during the Second World War.²⁵

With the amount of money received, the Army was not able to successfully accomplish all these tasks. An inventory completed in 1947 showed the Army had 370,000 “unserviceable-repairable” vehicles.²⁶ The Army placed approximately 14,000 (3.9 percent) of these in serviceable condition.²⁷ The remaining 356,000 remained “unserviceable-repairable,” as the Army lacked the estimated \$492 million to complete repairs.²⁸ This pattern of maintenance exceeding available funds would repeat itself during each of the next three fiscal years. For the Army, the effects would be significant, as it would further erode its ability to train for the simple reason that the required equipment would not be available.

Fiscal year 1948's budget was, like the fiscal year 1947 budget, inadequate for the Army's needs. The Department of the Army received an appropriation of \$5.96 billion.²⁹ This appropriation was, however, for both the Army and the newly created Air Force. Stripping out the \$1.13 billion allocated for the Air Force, the Army was left with just over \$4.83 billion for its own activities.³⁰ Out of that amount, the Army had to support the same range of missions it had supported the previous fiscal year, but with a smaller strength--particularly overseas. In the case of the Army's Far East Command, the command that would bear the brunt of the Korean War, the strength of units decreased from 300,000 in January 1947 to just 142,000 in January 1948.³¹ That these numbers were not smaller was due largely to the decision to reinstate conscription during 1948.

The draft notwithstanding, manpower accounts would not be the only ones to suffer due to shortfalls in the fiscal year 1948 budget. The accounts for combat service support were cut by almost one billion dollars and essential stockpiles could not be built up due to a funding shortfall of over two billion dollars.³² The impacts of these cuts were adjudged by General Dwight Eisenhower to be so severe as to warrant a candid memorandum to James Forrestal, Secretary of Defense, just after Eisenhower's vacating the post of Army Chief of Staff. In this memorandum, Eisenhower made the case that with "negligible exceptions" the Army was weak. Citing an Army that was short 100,000 authorized soldiers and with no new equipment purchased since the Second World War, Eisenhower laid bare the basic shortcomings of the Army--inadequate personnel and equipment.³³ Of greater import, he identified their genesis--three years of Army budgets that did not meet the service's most minimal needs.

For Forrestal, this was confirmation of what he had recorded in his own diary some eight weeks earlier. On 8 December 1947 he recorded: We are at the

present time keeping our military expenditures below the levels which our military leaders must in good conscience estimate as the minimum which would in themselves ensure national security. By doing so we are able to increase our expenditures to assist in European recovery. In other words, we are taking a calculated risk in order to follow a course which offers the prospect of eventually achieving national security and also long-term world security. As long as we can control the sea and strike inland with an atomic bomb, *we can assume certain risks otherwise unacceptable in an effort* [emphasis mine].³⁴

National military strategy had begun to shift in 1948 and the Army's meager budget reflected that shift.

The trend of inadequate budgets continued through fiscal year 1949 with the Army's initial appropriation being \$4.36 billion--a decrease of just under \$500 million from the 1948 amount.³⁵ In response to the changing global political landscape--most notably the fall of Nationalist China to the Chinese Communist Forces--Congress also approved a supplemental appropriation for the Department of Defense. This supplemental appropriation essentially restored the fiscal year 1949 budget to the fiscal year 1948 budget level.³⁶

Just as the amount was inadequate for 1948, so it was inadequate for 1949. Among the effects of the meager appropriation was the abandonment of the Army's four-year overhaul and rebuild program for tactical equipment.³⁷ Since the service was receiving very little new equipment, the overhaul and rebuild program represented a means of maintaining the weapons and vehicles the Army needed in the event of a crisis. The effects of abandoning this program after only one year would be evident once the Korean War started. The Army's senior leadership understood the issues associated with

ending this maintenance program. In his *Semi-Annual Report of the Secretary of the Army, July 1 to December 31 1949*, Secretary Gray clearly stated that one of the “many problems” that existed in trying to rebuild the Army’s effectiveness was “the serious shortages of modern equipment.”³⁸

As with the Army’s equipment accounts, its manpower accounts again suffered. At the start of the fiscal year, the Army had ten divisions, seven of which were overseas on occupation duty.³⁹ This included two divisions in Korea. At the end of the fiscal year, the Army’s on-paper strength was still ten divisions, but the two divisions in Korea had been withdrawn and the on-hand strength in all ten divisions did not match the required tables of organization and equipment. These budget-driven personnel weaknesses, weaknesses that existed throughout the immediate post-World War II period, created significant problems when six of these divisions would be committed to combat in Korea.

Like the fiscal years 1946 through 1949 budgets, the fiscal year 1950 budget was essentially a political creation, though the environment in which it was created was changing significantly as personalities and threat perceptions changed. In attempting to develop the fiscal year 1950 defense budget, the Joint Chiefs of Staff developed a budget requiring some \$30 billion.⁴⁰ This budget would meet the manning, training, and equipment needs of the Department of Defense and would give it the ability to execute the strategy the Joint Chiefs of Staff developed.

With the new Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson insistent on meeting the President’s guidance on minimal appropriations for defense, this proposed budget was never presented to the Congress. Instead, the Department of Defense’s senior civilian leadership pared it down to \$16.9 billion before presenting it to the Bureau of the

Budget.⁴¹ This agency, in turn, further reduced the recommendation to \$14.5 billion. Congress, in turn, funded the services to \$13.2 billion with the Army receiving only \$4.4 billion.⁴²

In practical terms, this budget served to further degrade the Army's capabilities. Among its tangible effects was a further reduction of \$24 million from the Army's ordnance account.⁴³ This account provided the means of funding the Army's vehicle and weapons maintenance requirements. Additionally, the Signal Corps budget was cut by some \$10 million.⁴⁴ This affected the Army's ability to both develop and maintain communications systems and to train the soldiers who would operate those systems.

Equally affected by the inadequate appropriation were the Army's Reserve Components. Despite an evolving manpower mobilization strategy that would place a great deal of importance on the Army National Guard and Organized Reserve Corps, the Army's Chief of Staff General J. Lawton Collins was forced to concede that the "lack of modern equipment precluded full National Guard mobilization."⁴⁵ The unfortunate reality was that neither the regular Army nor its Reserve Components would be funded against their legitimate requirements. The military risks associated with that would have to be accepted. The Secretary of Defense believed that high defense budgets represented a greater risk to the nation than any perceived external threat. Irrespective of the problems and risks, the President's objective--low defense appropriations--was achieved.

The most accurate summary of post-World War II budgets is that they were grounded in economic and not military necessities. It is hardly surprising that they did not create the minimum conditions required to field an effective Army. Lacking the ability to field the required force, to maintain the required equipment, or to modernize in

light of an increasing threat, the Army struggled to accomplish the minimum occupation and security duties its appropriations would allow. Those duties that did not have an immediate short-term effect, such as maintenance, would be deferred. Through the end of June 1950, that would not matter. After the first week of July, the consequences of this approach to funding became self-evident.

While the president and his budget policies played a large role in shaping the post-World War II Army, they were not the only role players. An evolving Soviet threat and economic recovery in Western Europe and US methods for responding to that threat also played significant roles. Just as the budget must be considered, so too must these factors as they greatly affected the administration's perceptions of the security environment as it rapidly evolved following the surrender of the Japanese Empire.

The period 1945 through 1948 was period of change in the United States' perceptions of the Soviet Union. In May 1945 the Soviet Union was the gallant ally who had borne the brunt of combat in Europe. Its suffering through the siege of Leningrad, the brutal combat of Stalingrad, and its crushing of the German Army at Kursk legitimized assertions that its perseverance had been a pivotal factor in the alliance against Nazi Germany. In August 1945, the Soviet Union was the newest addition to the Allied force in the war against the Japanese Empire. Its late entry notwithstanding, the Soviets had, in fact, committed ground troops against Japan. No less than France or China, the Soviet Union was regarded as a principal American partner in the war. The Soviet Union had fought side-by-side with the other victorious allies in a common cause. It would take less than thirty-six months for this partner to complete the transition from

ally to adversary. Along the way, the Soviet Union would force fundamental changes in American government and policy.

Points of friction with the Soviet Union appeared even before the surrender of Nazi Germany. These points included the exclusion of members of the London-based Polish government in exile from participation in the Polish government and the rapid establishment of outright communist governments in Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary, as those countries were liberated by the Soviet Army.⁴⁶ The imposition of puppet governments in these countries allowed Stalin to recreate a buffer zone between the Soviet Union and any potential threats from the West. Exacerbating this friction was the decision of the Soviet Union to break its troop deployment agreement with Iran and an attempt to claim a portion of the former Italian colony of Eritrea for the construction of a naval base.⁴⁷ Under the terms of its agreement with Iran, the Soviet Union should have redeployed its troops to the Soviet Union by mid-November 1945. Instead, the Soviets kept their troops in Iran until the spring of 1946.⁴⁸ As the nation transitioned from war to peace it was becoming increasingly apparent to many Americans that Stalin did not feel bound to honor any of its wartime agreements and would tend to pursue expansionist policies contrary to the Atlantic Charter, which had provided the theoretical foundation for the American-British-Soviet alliance of World War II.

The uneasiness created by the Soviet decision to violate agreements was further heightened by Stalin's 9 February 1946 speech in Moscow. Using the opportunity to declare communism and capitalism incompatible, Stalin pressed for increased military production within the Soviet Union. Stalin's requirement was a tripling of production. Industrial recovery and modernization would be needed to produce the tanks, assault

guns, and other weapons that would be needed when the expected confrontation with the capitalist West transpired in the 1950s.⁴⁹ Given the condition of the Soviet Union's postwar economy and the Soviet Union's reliance on American Lend-Lease aid for much of the war, this represented a tremendous challenge for the nation. That Stalin was willing to impose such a burden served to underscore the nature of the emerging threat.

Through 1946 the erosion of US-Soviet relations continued as the Soviet Union continued to pursue its own expansionist security policies. In Greece the Soviet Union and its satellites provided support to communist guerrillas attempting to replace the Greek monarchy with a communist state.⁵⁰ Coincidental with this, the Soviet Union pushed to change the Montreaux Convention of 1936 and to be given the authority to participate in the joint defense of the Dardanelles Straits with Turkey.⁵¹ Additionally, the Soviet's presented territorial claims to the Turkish provinces of Georgia and Armenia, an action that would compel the Turkish government to mobilize its armed forces.⁵² These actions, coupled with Soviet support of Iranian communist guerrillas, made clear that the end of war with Germany and Japan did not mean the end of conflict in Europe and Asia. Instead, it pointed to the beginning of a new-type of war, a war for which the United States was then unprepared.

Recognizing the changes posed by the Soviet Union, the Joint Chiefs of Staff prepared a memorandum for the administration on 27 July 1946. This memorandum was one of the government's first expressions of the gravity posed by monolithic communist expansion. Calling "world domination" the overall Soviet objective, the Joint Chief of Staff expressed the belief that peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union would, in the long run, prove impossible. While the level of conflict was currently "below the level of

shooting war,” it was nonetheless a deadly conflict with the Soviet Union.⁵³ As such, it represented a new war to American interests and planners, and it would require some new approaches to domestic, military and foreign policy if this new “cold” war were to be won.

By late 1946, the Truman administration recognized that only a firm, active policy on the part of the American government could ensure domestic stability in Greece and safeguard an independent Turkey. Coincidental with this realization, the administration began to develop the foundations of its future foreign policy. In this policy, the key task would be containing the influence of the Soviet Union. In his 6 January 1947 State of the Union Message to Congress, President Truman hinted at the changing approach to dealing with the Soviets by denouncing some of the Soviet Union’s fundamental actions in Eastern Europe. Despite the fact that the war in Europe had been over for almost two years, peace treaties had yet to be signed with a number of the nations with whom the US had been at war. Announcing the “delay in arriving at the first peace settlements is due partly to the difficulty of reaching agreement with the Soviet Union on the terms of the settlement,” Truman clearly articulated the fundamental problems facing the State Department in trying to shape U.S. policy in post-war Europe.⁵⁴

On 12 March 1947 the president followed up his State of the Union Message with the announcement of his new foreign policy--the so-called Truman Doctrine.⁵⁵ This policy stated that the United States “must assist free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities (political insurgents) or outside pressures,” the basic components of expansionist Soviet policy.⁵⁶ Placing the primary responsibility for action on the governments threatened, Truman laid out the key piece of his new policy:

American economic and financial aid. Part of this assistance would be provided by so-called Marshall Plan funds, which would be used to stimulate economic recovery in the participating countries. Part of this support would also be provided in direct funding for military purposes. For Greece and Turkey, this new policy translated into some \$400 million in aid through the end of fiscal year 1948.⁵⁷ In Greece this money would be used to purchase the materials necessary to prosecute a counterinsurgency campaign, to improve the nation's infrastructure and to repair the damage caused by the insurgency-counterinsurgency campaign. In Turkey it would be used to cover both the costs of mobilization and modernization of the Turkish armed forces.

The announcement of the Truman Doctrine did not materially change the policies or attitudes of the Soviet Union. Throughout Eastern Europe and occupied Germany and Austria, Soviet policies remained focused on creating pro-Soviet governments and a buffer zone of satellite nations that would protect the western approaches into the Soviet Union. The success of these policies and their effect on American attitudes towards the Soviet Union were found in President Truman's comments on the signing of peace treaties with three former enemies: Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania. In a direct rebuke to Stalin, Truman stated, "I must publicly express regret that the governments of those countries have not only disregarded the will of the majority of the people but have resorted to measures of oppression against them."⁵⁸ The governments of all three countries were led by communists who had been selected by the Soviet government by virtue of their faithful service to Soviet communism. The breached promises of 1945 were codified with the ratification of these peace treaties in 1947.⁵⁹

Throughout this period, questions remained over the final fate of Germany, then occupied by the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Soviet Union. The tensions brought about by Soviet actions in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania served to preclude any real cooperation in charting a firm course for the country. Coincidental with this was the realization that reestablishing Germany's economy was a requirement to rebuild Europe. Until a course for rehabilitation could be developed, the revitalization of Germany, its economic potential, was a physical impossibility. Initially, the Soviet Union desired a unified and neutral Germany. All four Allied zones of occupation would be reunited into a single country that would, by virtue of geography and the close presence of Soviet pressure, be economically exploited by the Soviet Union. This would be followed by the outright emplacement of a Communist government that would subordinate its own interests to those of the Soviets. With the breakdown in Allied cooperation, the Soviets considered a different approach to resolving Germany's final status. This new approach envisioned the creation of two German states--a weak West Germany and a stronger, industrialized East Germany.⁶⁰ The establishment of a Communist East Germany would then provide the Soviet Union with a well-developed cordon of countries that could serve as both a buffer from any attack from the West as well as a springboard for any future attack against the West.⁶¹ With the merging of economic policies and currency in the Western Allies' occupation zones, the conditions for creating a communist German state presented themselves.⁶²

The year 1948 represented the perigee in American-Soviet relations during the immediate post-World War II period. Beginning with a Communist-led coup in Czechoslovakia in February, the Soviet Union was able to further improve its security

zone by establishing another satellite state astride its western approaches. This event was shortly followed by the April 1948 partial blockade on all rail transport moving into Berlin.⁶³ In response to this partial blockade, the United States began using cargo aircraft to move material for military use into the city. In response to this effort to circumvent the blockade, the Soviet Air Force began harassing cargo flights over the Soviet occupation zone.⁶⁴ This aerial action was followed up with the complete surface blockade of Berlin by the Soviet Union on 24 June 1948.⁶⁵ The Berlin blockade was the single most-egregious violation of the rules of the Allied Control Commission (the combined American-British-French-Soviet agency that had been constituted to oversee the occupation of Germany) undertaken by the Soviet Union during the post-World War II period. While it has been argued that the intent was to force the Western Allies to quit Berlin, the strategic purpose of the blockade was to cause a loss of confidence in the United States among the nations of Europe and effectively prevent the United States from exerting any influence on the continent.⁶⁶ If the Soviet Union were successful in accomplishing this task, it would remain the sole superpower on the continent and would be able to dictate economic terms and conditions to the countries of Western Europe--to the detriment of the United States. By early July, an airlift was underway that was designed to both supply West Berlin's civilian populace, as well as the occupation armies of the Western Allies, and demonstrate in clarion terms to the Soviet Union that the United States would not be forced out of Europe. American policy in Europe would, in fact, be determined in Washington and not in Moscow. If the agreements of Yalta and Potsdam were dead by virtue of Soviet action, the underlying spirit of those agreements--

that the United States would develop and enforce policies in Europe consistent with its national interests--was essentially unaltered despite Soviet efforts.

In evaluating the changing post-World War II security environment, it is clear that the initiative was initially held by the Soviet Union. Its actions tended to serve as the engine for both initial policy development and change through the period. As a result of this, the United States tended to respond fitfully to the initial challenges presented by the Soviet Union. A combination of optimism and concern that pushing the Soviets might require actions for which the United States was unprepared served to set the pace for American decisions and actions. Once the threat was fully recognized, however, the Truman administration began searching for viable means of confronting it. Out of this search came both the policy of containment and the practice of appropriate response, as demonstrated by the Berlin airlift. An appropriate response, however, was a difficult proposition, as it could require the short-fuzed commitment of scare resources and the resultant requirement for capital spending. These actions could create the very kinds of inflationary pressures that President Truman was seeking to avoid with his twenty-one-point reconversion plan.

While the primary focus of American foreign policy was based on containing the Soviet Union's influence in Europe, the Truman administration also had to consider the implications of national strategy in other parts of the world--most notably Asia. While the signing of the instrument of surrender in 1945 ended direct American involvement in China, the fighting in China between rival Chinese factions continued unabated.⁶⁷ Chiang KaiCZhek's Nationalist government remained locked in battle with the communist forces of Mao Tse Dong as the Chinese Civil War of the 1930s continued

unabated into the late 1940s. Coincidental with this was the emergence of insurgencies in French Indo-China and the Malay Peninsula. Though these were in response to colonial rule, these insurgencies were led by communist organizations.⁶⁸ Finally, there was the ever-increasing tension between north and south Korea. All of these served to create instability on the Asian continent and served to reinforce the perceptions of a monolithic communist threat to American and Western interests. In response to the combination of deteriorating political situations on the Asian mainland and the decreasing resources available to respond to crises with conventional forces, America sought to develop a credible strategy to safeguard its Asian and Pacific interests.

The American approach to security in the region was the development of an offshore security perimeter that would allow the United States to retain control of key defensive facilities in the region while not risking American troops on the Asian continent itself. Publicly articulated by Secretary of State Dean Acheson in January 1950, this perimeter was described as extending northeast from the Philippine Islands through Okinawa, the Japanese home islands and ending in the Aleutian Islands of the then Alaska Territory.⁶⁹ The significance of this decision lay in its reinforcing the primary combat mission of the Eighth US Army in Japan: defense of the Japanese archipelago. The inference of the security perimeter was that American military power would be directed against threats to the perimeter itself, not to regions that lay on the Asian continent.

With economic considerations paramount and with the perception that the Soviet Union and its client states, both real and imagined, would not be able to match American capabilities until the early 1950s, the United States searched for the most cost effective

means of providing for its security. In the end, Truman's decision was to provide security through the combination of foreign aid (the Marshall Plan) and support to threatened countries that displayed the will to resist Soviet or communist-insurgent pressures (as evidenced by the \$400 million provided to Greece and Turkey).

Coincidental with this, the United States would develop a credible deterrent that would serve to limit territorial and political expansionism by the Soviet Union. Successful implementation of these actions would ensure the United States could defend its vital interests without impinging on Truman's twenty-one-point plan.

With the refinement of a national security strategy the primary question for the Department of Defense became the means of developing an effective deterrent to communist expansion. Any deterrent had to be effective in halting Soviet intentions by making it clear that the cost of expansion was greater than the rewards. This had to be affordable both in terms of personnel and funding--it could not constitute a brake on the economy and it had to be sustainable over an extended period. Finally, it had to be a legitimate one in the eyes of the American people. If these criteria were not met, the deterrent would, over the short term, prove to be ineffective and, thus, unsupportable. As such, any funds invested in it would be unrecoverable and place Truman's objective of balanced government spending at risk.

Given the overriding economic considerations, the most desirable course of action was developing a deterrent that capitalized on existing weapons technologies. At the time, World War II represented the apogee of American technology. The forces and weapons that existed at the end of the war were scarcely envisioned when the nation began mobilization of the National Guard in February 1940.⁷⁰ In the span of just over

five years, the United States developed a range of military technologies that gave the nation the ability to deploy forces virtually anywhere in the world with the ability to successfully fight upon their arrival. Much of this technological progress was made in the fields of both aeronautical engineering and nuclear physics. In terms of monies spent, the two most expensive weapons programs of the war were the development of the B-29 Superfortress bomber and the atomic bomb.⁷¹ Given the fact that these two weapons represented the fruits of significant investment and the fact that the American public would not stand for a large standing military, it was almost inevitable that the post-World War II deterrent would initially be based on the ability to once again employ these weapons.

The effort to develop a credible deterrent began almost immediately following the end of World War II. Despite the successful use of the atomic bomb in forcing the surrender of the Japanese Empire in August 1945, a great many questions were raised about the capabilities, effects, and limitations of atomic weapons. As a result of these questions, the War and Navy Departments developed plans for peacetime testing of the atomic bomb in 1946. Operation Crossroads was designed to provide both military planners and engineers with a range of technical data to support future plans and weapons systems development by providing clear weapons effects information.⁷² Proposed by the services in December 1945, the test was approved by the Truman administration on 10 January 1946. Crossroads entailed the dropping of an atomic bomb over Bikini Atoll on 1 July 1946, followed by a subsurface detonation in the same area on 25 July 1946.⁷³ The target array for the test was a range of United States and Japanese naval vessels--both combatants and auxiliaries.⁷⁴ The results of the test, released almost one year later,

pointed out the relatively low level of damage the bomb caused to surface combatants-- primarily due to the extensive use of steel in construction and the ability of the vessels to move on three axes to mitigate the blast effects of the weapon. As a result of this the Crossroads report stated that the atomic bomb was “pre-eminently a weapon for use against people and activities in large urban and industrial areas.”⁷⁵ This assessment would figure prominently in the development of specific war plans designed to counter the Soviet Union.

Though technical information was lacking (pending the results of Operation Crossroads), serious strategic planning, based on the employment of strategic bombers and a combination of conventional and nuclear weapons, began in March 1946. An air staff study prepared at that time read, “if sufficient force were applied in a short enough period of time against the major cities of a modern nation, a morale collapse would end the war.”⁷⁶ In the eyes of the planners, nuclear weapons represented sufficient force. The result of this was the 1946 establishment of the Army Air Forces Strategic Air Command (SAC) and the initial development of plans for the successful employment of the command--SAC OPLAN 14-47 (Earshot Junior).⁷⁷ Significantly, the establishment of SAC was an Army-Army Air Forces decision. At the time, there was no common understanding among the services or within the Executive Branch as to what the actual postwar capabilities of the Armed Forces would be. This action was an Army Air Forces response to the prevailing conditions: a small force, a belief in the supremacy of strategic bombing as a way of waging war, and a need to capitalize on the emerging capabilities of nuclear weapons.

Through 1946 and 1947 a range of plans would be developed to support strategic bombardment, though this had not yet been agreed upon as the primary means of deterring the Soviet Union. In August 1947 OPLAN Broiler was published. This was the first plan to articulate a likely time line for execution, with the assumption that war would occur with the Soviet Union within three years (1950).⁷⁸ Broiler presumed the wartime alliance of Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States would remain intact and that the forces of all these countries would be employed, with the United States conducting atomic bombardment from Canada and the United Kingdom. This plan also assumed that overwhelming Soviet superiority on the ground would mean that the Soviets had gained control of Western Europe. Broiler was quickly followed up by OPLAN Charioteer, which assumed a longer planning horizon and the same assumptions, with the addition of Egypt as a place for launching nuclear and conventional bombardments.⁷⁹ Broiler and Charioteer notwithstanding, the reality is that resources required to execute either plan still did not exist within either the SAC or the rest of the Defense Department. In the words of one senior Air Force officer, “As a deterrent to aggression in its early years, SAC was far more symbol than reality.” As 1948 approached, emphasis was placed on upgrading SAC’s capabilities.⁸⁰

On the eve of fiscal year 1948, a key event in the evolution of the nation’s nuclear deterrent occurred with the delivery of the first consolidated aircraft B36 strategic bomber.⁸¹ Stemming from a design program that began in 1941, the B36 represented the a “pure” intercontinental bomber.⁸² Coincidental with delivery of these aircraft, the nation’s nuclear stockpile was also expanded. In mid-1947, the stockpile of atomic bombs was thirteen. By mid-1948 this number would increase to fifty, an increase of

almost 400 percent.⁸³ The impetus for the increase stemmed from two distinct government inquiries, the Finletter Commission and the Brewster Committee, and their reports to the Congress.⁸⁴

Established to examine a range of issues associated with both the commercial and military implications and applications of airpower, the Finletter Commission's report provided clear recommendations regarding the size, purpose, and requirements of the newly created US Air Force, and the size and composition of the Navy and Marine Corps' air components. Using many of the same witnesses, the Brewster Committee's report drew many of the same conclusions as the Finletter Commission, to include the viability of a land-based strategic bomber force that was capable of attacking targets at extended distances. Key to developing a credible land-based atomic capability was Finletter's finding that the advent of atomic weapons and the ability to deliver them could be of critical importance in determining the outcome of future wars.⁸⁵ The result of this was a Joint Chiefs of Staff recommendation for an active Air Force of 70 groups supported by 27 Air National Guard and 8.3 Air Force Reserve groups.⁸⁶ This would give the Air Force approximately 20,000 aircraft.⁸⁷ To support the Finletter plan, the Navy and Marine Corps would operate another 14,500 aircraft in their Active and Reserve Components.⁸⁸ In the opinion of the Joint Chiefs, this organization would give the services the ability to carry out the anticipated range of missions against a nonnuclear Soviet Union. Through 1948 the ascending service (and capabilities) within the national defense establishment was the Air Force and its steadily increasing ability to deter outright Soviet aggression through the strategic application of nuclear bombs with supporting conventional bombing attacks.

While the Finletter and Brewster commissions were hearing witnesses and preparing their reports, the Air Force's planners were continuing to refine nuclear war plans. On 5 May 1948 President Truman was briefed on a new strategic war plan: OPLAN Halfmoon. Drawing extensively on an analysis of both World War II strategic bombing campaigns and Operation Crossroads data, Halfmoon postulated that an attack with fifty nuclear bombs against twenty key cities could paralyze the Soviet Union's ability to wage war.⁸⁹ These attacks could then be followed up with conventional bombs as required to complete the destruction of the Soviet Union's industrial, petroleum, and transportation capabilities. More significant than its target array or scientific analysis, however, was Halfmoon's assumption that war with the Soviet Union could occur within one year.⁹⁰ The combination of Finletter-Brewster and the publication of Halfmoon served as the mechanism for rapid expansion of the nation's nuclear arsenal and the underlying reliance on the Air Force as the primary means of deterrence. This fact was underscored by President Truman's 13 September 1948 endorsement of NSC 30. This memorandum codified the reliance upon atomic weapons as the appropriate way to conduct a bombing campaign against the Soviet Union in the event of war.⁹¹

Truman's endorsement of NSC 30 was significant in that it was undertaken despite the concerns of several key civilian and military leaders. Secretary of Defense Forrestal harbored lingering concerns over possible "containing wars" which would not be supportable with either strategic bombers or nuclear weapons.⁹² Generals of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower and Omar Bradley expressed concerns over a growing "imbalance" in the nation's military capabilities.⁹³ These imbalances could set the conditions for the employment of military power in a narrow range of the spectrum of

military operations. This could, in turn, limit the ability of the nation to defend its national interests at the lower end of the spectrum of operations. These concerns notwithstanding, the Department of Defense continued planning for nuclear options.

As 1949 unfolded, the effects of NSC 30 became more pronounced through a further refinement of the nation's nuclear war plans. OPLAN Halfmoon evolved into OPLAN Double Star. OPLAN Double Star further developed into OPLAN Trojan. OPLAN Trojan saw both a reappraisal of targets and the increasing availability of bombs to evolve into OPLAN Off Tackle.⁹⁴ The technical ability of the Air Force to successfully prosecute Off Tackle improved dramatically through 1949. By the end of the year, the Air Force had 300 atomic bombs and possessed over 120 aircraft to deliver them.⁹⁵ More importantly, an increasing number of these aircraft were the B36 long-range bomber. This aircraft and its follow-on, the jet-engined B47, would represent the physical manifestation of the recommendations of the Finletter Commission. With both the B36 and nuclear bombs available in strategically significant numbers, the nation finally possessed the ability to prosecute the fundamental war plans it had been developing since 1946. This capability gives credence to the argument that the nation's national defense strategy was purely aerial-delivered nuclear weapons and based on the assumption that the United States would only fight under the most-extreme circumstances and would fight with strategic aircraft and nuclear weapons as its primary means of delivering the fight to the enemy.

What, then, are the cumulative effects of executive-level policy decisions on the United States Army during the immediate post-World War II period? In their simplest terms, the Army was seen as a relevant service only in terms of its ability to support

occupation policies in Germany, Austria, and Japan. In an era where the strategic bomber and the nuclear bomb seemed to offer the best guarantee of the nation's security, there was little impetus to fund, modernize, or maintain an Army capable of tactical operations on short notice.

The likelihood of ground war was considered remote. The only likely direct threat was the one posed by the Soviet Union. The Truman Doctrine of having threatened nations fight their own wars seemed to be working, and Soviet-inspired insurrections were failing to accomplish their objectives in Greece and Turkey. If direct conflict with the Soviet Union occurred, it was assumed that the Army would have sufficient time in the wake of nuclear attacks to mobilize and then conduct tactical operations in order to complete the removal of Soviet troops from Western Europe--the envisioned mission. Given these presumptions, it was acceptable to fund the Army at the lowest possible level without any real risk to the nation's security. Though Secretary of Defense Forrestal periodically recognized the risks associated with this decision, this did not affect the Army's appropriations during the period.

Professionals, such as Eisenhower and Bradley, argued with some success that such simplifications failed to recognize the role of land power in establishing the capabilities for airpower. These arguments aided in making Forrestal see the risks the nation was taking. They were not, however, enough to make Harry Truman change his mind regarding his military appropriations. Risk or no risk, the requirements of the Armed Services were not going to jeopardize his twenty-one-point reconversion plan. When the Finletter Commission released its report it made it possible for Truman to justify holding the line on spending by providing a cost-effective means of ensuring

security. A smaller Air Force, investing in airplanes and electronics, was a far more-attractive organization economically than a large Army that spent very little on equipment and a great deal of money on food, clothing, and ammunition.

For better or worse, Truman had found a means to secure the nation's postwar economic growth. An air-delivered nuclear strategy gave Truman the conditions required for the economic boom required to finally complete the recovery from the Great Depression by placing the economy on a firm, nongovernment foundation. The Army would adapt, as it had always adapted, to lean budgets and a great deal of neglect. So long as it was not called upon to soldier--to fight--the Army could drift along for an extended period in a kind of institutional torpor, accomplishing the minimal occupational tasks assigned. The Army would do just that for fifty-seven months. With the start of month fifty-eight, the bill would have to be paid, the hard way, in Korea.

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³General Accounting Office, *Fiscal Year 1990 Historical Tables* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1989), Table 1.3, 19.

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⁵Bevin Alexander, *Korea: The First War We Lost* (New York: Hypocrene Books, 1986), 48; GA Omar N. Bradley, *A General's Life: The Autobiography by General of the Army Omar N. Bradley* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 473-474.

⁶Truman, *Public Papers, 1945*, 264.

⁷*Ibid.*, 271, 113; Robert J. Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1945-1948* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1977), 113.

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- ²¹*Ibid.*, 12; and John M. Kendall, *An Inflexible Response: US Army Manpower Mobilization Policies: 1945-1957* (Raleigh-Durham: Duke University, History Department, 1982), 68.
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²⁵James A. Huston, *Guns and Butter, Powder and Rice: US Army Logistics in the Korean War* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1989), 28.

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CHAPTER 3

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY DECISIONS

The period 1945 through 1950 was one of profound change for the Army. In May 1945 Nazi Germany had been defeated, but war still raged with the Japanese Empire. On 30 June 1945 the Army's approximate strength was 5,984,114 soldiers organized into seventy-two infantry divisions, sixteen armored divisions, and a range of Army Air Forces units scattered around the globe.¹ Within 2 ½ months of that date, the Japanese Empire collapsed; and the Army began an occupation of four countries on two continents, the maintenance of one combat division in contact against a former ally pressing territorial claims against a defeated belligerent, and a massive demobilization that would see its strength fall by 75 percent within twelve months.² Within another twelve months, its strength would be cut by an additional 55 percent. The result would be an Army of just over 683,000 by 30 June 1947.³ Coincidental with this, it would lose control of the Army Air Forces. This equated to a reduction in strength of 89 percent over a twenty-four-month period from the force that was present for duty upon Germany's surrender in May 1945. How the Army responded to the challenges posed simultaneously by its ongoing postwar missions while attempting to prepare for future missions must be considered in order to understand the Army's initial performance in Korea. In this chapter the manning (both during and after demobilization), organization, training, and equipping of the Army's field forces, as determined by the Department of the Army, will be examined. This examination will show that the Army successfully developed the theoretical means for accomplishing tactical operations by improving the design of its divisions and the equipment those divisions required. It will also show that the Army

failed to establish the conditions for tactical success by misapplying scarce personnel, equipment, and financial resources. The result of this misapplication would be an essentially “hollow” organization that, when called upon, would not be able to rapidly and effectively perform its statutory missions.

The end of the war in the Pacific signaled the end of the largest military buildup in the nation’s history and the beginning of its largest and most rapid demobilization. The initial challenges of demobilization lay in maintaining the Army of Occupation in Europe, Japan, and Korea while seeing manpower evaporate virtually overnight. As demobilization continued, maintaining a credible training base and general reserve that could provide the foundation for future operations also had to be considered. To understand the effects of demobilization, it is necessary to see beyond the simple numbers; it is necessary to see the types of individuals who were leaving the service and the burdens those releases imposed on the Army as it transitioned to a peacetime organization.

The Army viewed demobilization as a process of releasing *individuals* from active duty. To that end, a point system was developed that created a kind of “order of merit” list that awarded points to soldiers based on their time in service, time spent in an overseas theater of operations, and time spent in combat.⁴ For those soldiers who were cited for heroism, received a combat infantryman’s badge or combat medics badge, or were wounded additional points were awarded. Points were also awarded based on the soldier’s marital and paternity status. Under this system, individuals who had earned seventy or more points were eligible for discharge on 1 October 1945.⁵ By 1 March 1946 soldiers with forty points were theoretically eligible for discharge.⁶ This point-based

system applied to both officers and enlisted personnel. The effect of this approach to demobilization was the rapid release of the most-experienced soldiers--generally the key noncommissioned officers. The removal of these individuals tended to cause a breakdown in both unit discipline and morale. As a soldier's expected demobilization date approached, and it could be easily calculated, his general performance tended to decline. The results of this practice were aggregations of soldiers that were euphemistically considered units, but which lacked the effectiveness to carry out their primary missions. The losses of key leaders and trainers could not be effectively overcome.

The seriousness of this decline is illustrated in the response of the commanding generals of Army Forces in the Pacific and Europe to an inquiry on demobilization effects from the joint staff planners in November 1945. The European commander estimated that if offensive actions were required, his troops--combat, service, and air--"could operate in an emergency for a limited period at something *less than 50% normal wartime efficiency*" (emphasis mine).⁷ General Douglas MacArthur's response to this same inquiry was "at something more than 50% normal wartime efficiency except in amphibious operations. Supporting air elements could operate at something less than 50% efficiency."⁸ By opting to discharge individuals as opposed to units, the Army created conditions that precluded meaningful organization or training in both its combat and service units. As demobilization progressed, this would negatively affect the Army's ability to deal with the range of missions it had to perform. Most significantly, recovery and maintenance of tactical equipment (tanks, wheeled vehicles, engineer equipment, and others) suffered due to the loss of skilled technically proficient soldiers.⁹ This loss of

skilled manpower would create significant problems for the Army as demobilization was completed and the Army began to operate on something approaching a “routine” peacetime basis.

Officially, the Army’s World War II demobilization ended on 30 June 1947 with the discharge of the service’s last wartime draftees.¹⁰ With the business of “shrinking” the Army accomplished, the institution had to once again shift its focus to the task of recruiting and sustaining its authorized force structure. This task would create its own difficulties, as both the Army’s strength and field organization fluctuated somewhat between June 1947 and June 1950 in response to changing perceptions of the Soviet threat and the limitations imposed by the lean budgets of the postwar period.

The first problem was recruiting. The end of the war brought about an economic boom, and employment was readily found by virtually anybody who wanted to work. While the 1945 Armed Forces Recruiting Act created both pay and benefits incentives for enlistment, the reality is the pay lagged behind that of the private sector.¹¹ The majority of enlistees entering the service from late 1945 until October 1946 was entering for the purpose of qualifying for the World War II era “GI Bill.”¹² These enlistments were for short periods and left the Army with an ongoing problem--high personnel turnover. With the expiration of these benefits, the Army began to experience a decline in the quality of its enlistees. This decline could be quantified by comparing the range of test scores of new enlistees on the Army General Qualification Test (AGQT).¹³ This standardized test was used to determine the qualifications and aptitudes of new enlistees to match their capabilities with the specific job requirements of the Army. In a survey taken by the Army in September 1950, over 43 percent of the soldiers scored in the lowest mental

categories. In some regiments, the percentages were even higher. Two of the regiments of the 25th Infantry Division, the 24th and 27th, had 62 percent and 47 percent in the lowest categories respectively.¹⁴ This created problems for the Army as World War II experience indicated that soldiers whose scores were in the lower categories were both less reliable in combat and tended to be more wasteful of equipment.¹⁵ In Korea, where individual performance would be at a premium and where supply lines were rudimentary, these weaknesses posed problems for tactical commanders.

Fluctuations in the field organization of the Army also impacted manning the force. A comparison of the 1948 and 1949 locations of divisions shows just how fluid the Army's manning requirements were during the period.¹⁶

DIVISION LOCATIONS		
	1 July 1948	1 July 1949
CONUS:	82d Airborne Division 2nd Infantry Division 2nd Armor Division (minus) 3rd Cavalry	82d Airborne Division 2nd Infantry Division 3rd Infantry Division 3rd Cavalry
Japan:	1st Cavalry Division 11th Airborne Division 24th Infantry Division 25th Infantry Division	1st Cavalry Division 7th Infantry Division 24th Infantry Division 25th Infantry Division
Korea:	6th Infantry Division 7th Infantry Division	No tactical units
Europe:	1st Infantry Division US Constabulary 350th Regt Combat Team 351st Regt Combat Team	1st Infantry Division US Constabulary 350th Regt Combat Team 351st Regt Combat Team
Caribbean:	65th Regt Combat Team 33rd Regt Combat Team	65th Regt Combat Team 1st Infantry Battalion

The deactivation of the understrength armored division, an infantry division, and an airborne division, coupled with the transfer of troops from Japan to Korea and the drawdown of the regimental combat team in the Panama Canal Zone, meant that a significant percentage of the Army Field Forces spent a great deal of fiscal year 1948 either preparing for or executing a unit move--with all the attendant affects. In 1949, this situation had not improved, with the Far East Command estimating personnel turnover at approximately 43 percent of the command's assigned strength.¹⁷

Just as the instability of enlisted personnel posed challenges to the Army, the service's officer strength also posed problems. The postwar Army was considerably larger than its prewar counterpart. As such, it had a greater requirement for company grade officers. During the war, ROTC and OCS graduates, along with the small number of officers commissioned directly from the ranks, allowed the Army to meet its officer strength requirements. With the end of the war, that situation changed as a great many of these officers were demobilized. To increase the number of company grade officers holding Regular Army commissions and, thus, to meet its officer strength requirements, the Army developed a training program that allowed an officer with a reserve commission to qualify for a commission in the regular component.¹⁸ This program, entitled the Competitive Tour Program, allowed officers to serve in a range of command and staff assignments for twelve-week periods. After satisfactorily completing the required assignments, the officer could apply for and receive the regular commission. This program was successful in giving company-grade officers a range of professional experiences, but it devastated battalions because it denied them any stable company-grade leadership. Even officers who did not require transfers to qualify for a regular

commission were affected, as they had to vacate their positions to allow the participating officer the experience.

The lean appropriations of the 80th Congress also imposed a significant impact on manning the Army's combat formations. Post-World War II funding did not allow for each active division to be manned at 100 percent of its assigned strength. As the demobilization process continued, units fell below their wartime strengths. With the end of demobilization, personnel shortages throughout the service caused the Army to man its combat units at a reduced strength. For the units of the Far East Command's Eighth United States Army (EUSA), unit strengths were an average of 12,500 soldiers per division with a wartime authorization (the actual strength required for the division to fight as designed) of 18,900 soldiers through fiscal years 1948 and 1949.¹⁹ These figures did not significantly change through fiscal year 1950 as the average regiment lacked one battalion (the sole exception being the segregated 24th Infantry Regiment) and the authorized regimental tank company.²⁰ Additionally, the division's tank, artillery, and air defense artillery battalions were all reduced to a single company-sized element.²¹ The risks associated with such a manning policy were not fully understood by Secretary of the Army Gordon Gray. In his semiannual report to the Congress for the period 1 July 1949 through 31 December 1949, Gray stated: "Reductions did not effect the overall composition of the Army, in that the ten division structure was maintained, but were partially accomplished by a reduction of authorized strengths . . . to a reduced strength sufficient for peacetime conditions or limited periods of combat."²²

In making this report to the Congress, the secretary failed to recognize the second or third order effects that flowed from attempting to build combat-effective units without the most-essential element--qualified soldiers.

With the decision to commit troops to Korea, the Army embarked on a “crash program” to fill personnel vacancies within its combat formations. This program released soldiers from noncombat assignments and transferred them to combat units, either already overseas or in the continental United States.²³ The rapid flow of replacements into the Far Eastern Command represented a means of quickly filling vacancies, but it contributed very little in terms of combat effectiveness, as it formalized groupings of strangers who frequently lacked the tactical and technical proficiency required to serve as infantrymen.²⁴ Combat, particularly armor or infantry combat, is a collective endeavor that is most successfully carried out when small units of soldiers who have worked together, trained together, and developed an understanding of each other are employed under mature leadership. The arrival of replacements created the illusion of combat formations. The crash program provided the raw human material that, over time, could have been used to create effective units through training, discipline, and the development of mature squad, platoon, and company-level leadership. The reality is the immediate nature of replacement operations precluded any of these essential actions from taking place beyond some minimal individual training for those soldiers deploying by ship.²⁵ When committed to combat these units repeatedly demonstrated the inability to perform at the required level.

In summary, the Army’s postwar manning could be most accurately described as inadequate. Initially, the service lost the overwhelming majority of its most-experienced

soldiers in the twenty-two months following the surrender of Japan. Over the next three years, it relied on a combination of volunteers and conscripts to fill the small number of units it fielded. These volunteers frequently represented the lower end of the intelligence spectrum as measured by the Army's standardized tests, and often lacked the officer leadership required due to the turbulence induced by the service's officer personnel management and training policies.

Problems with officer turbulence were magnified by the low strength within the Army's regiments and battalions. The decision to keep combat units at approximately 66 percent strength meant that meaningful collective training was virtually impossible above the battalion level. This problem applied to both infantry and artillery units. Finally, the Army exacerbated the problems associated with low-manning levels by attempting to fill its units in a crisis by robbing from one organization to fill another. This meant that the benefits that might have been derived from collective training evaporated when soldiers were shuffled from one unit to another. The cumulative effect of these decisions was the deployment of units that lacked the technical and tactical proficiency gained from personnel stability.

Just as the actual manning of units changed with the end of World War II, so too did the organization of the Army. Once the enemy surrendered, the Army began a review of its organizational structures in an effort to improve the basic design and capabilities in light of the lessons learned from wartime experience. Beginning with the US European Theater of Operations General Board and ending with Army Ground Forces, a range of committees and panels sought to improve the effectiveness of the Army's infantry, airborne, and armor divisions.²⁶ The Army's end-of-war tables of organization for

infantry divisions had remained essentially unchanged since 15 July 1943.²⁷ The basic structure called for some 14,253 soldiers organized into three infantry regiments, each regiment containing three battalions. Each battalion, in turn, consisted of a headquarters company, three rifle companies, and a weapons company. To provide combined arms support for the regiment, it also contained a cannon company and antitank company. Additional support for the division was provided by four artillery battalions, the engineer battalion, the reconnaissance troop, the medical battalion, and the division's special troops--logistics, military police, and signal troops. Absent from the tables of organization was any armor, tank destroyer, or antiaircraft artillery. Wartime practice had been to detach such units from corps or theater organizations and attach them to divisions on an "as required" basis.²⁸

Completing the review of the infantry division's table of organization, the Army published the new divisional table of organization on 7 July 1948.²⁹ The Army sought to correct this practice by including both a tank and antiaircraft artillery battalion in the revised table of organization.³⁰ Just as the division received a dedicated tank unit, so also did each regiment. The regimental table of organization was adjusted to include a tank company. Additionally, the existing cannon company was eliminated from the regiment and replaced with a heavy mortar company. In terms of capabilities, these changes represented significant improvements for both divisional and regimental commanders. Where before each depended on the largesse of his next higher headquarters for armor support, each commander now had armor units that he controlled. More importantly, this gave the ability for the division commander to mass his armor, as he did not have to detach companies to support the subordinate regiments. The replacement of the cannon

company (105 millimeter) with the 4.2-inch (107 millimeter) mortar provided the regimental commander with more flexible fire support in return for a slight decrease in maximum effective range. With the assignment of the regimental tank company, the antitank company was eliminated. Antitank weapons (rocket launchers and recoilless rifles) remained on the tables of organization within the regimental heavy weapons company. These changes increased the authorized strength of the division to 18,804 soldiers, an increase of over 4,500 soldiers.³¹ For the ten authorized conventional infantry divisions this represented a requirement for 45,000 soldiers--almost the equivalent of three World War II divisions. These changes to the infantry tables of organization were well reasoned and provided the theoretical basis for sustained, successful combat against an enemy capable of combined arms operations.

With this new divisional structure, the Army created a unit that, if fully manned and equipped, provided the correct weapons systems for combat against a modern opponent. The combination of a tank company and the distribution of antitank weapons in the weapons company of each regiment gave the regiment the organic ability to successfully defeat enemy armor. The regimental heavy mortar company gave each regiment a weapon that was almost tailor-made for the mountainous terrain of Korea--the 4.2-inch mortar. The inclusion of the antiaircraft artillery battalion gave the division a very flexible heavy machine-gun organization that could be employed against both aircraft and dismounted infantry. These improvements counted for little, however, when the Army opted to man a greater number of divisions at low levels instead of a smaller number of divisions at the strength required by the table of organization.

The issues of manning and organizing the Army also left an imprint on the Army's peacetime training. As with manning and organization, the genesis of this imprint was found in both the Army's appropriations and its missions, with funding considerations overriding mission considerations. During the Second World War, the Army employed several means of conducting basic training. In some cases, soldiers reported directly to their units from their initial reception station and then trained and fought with that unit--"train and retain."³² Other soldiers, primarily those classified into combat support or service support specialties, underwent a basic combat training program that lasted seventeen weeks.³³ The purpose of this training program was twofold. The first objective was to "transform" the civilian into a soldier. At the completion of the program, the soldier would, if nothing else, understand the meaning of discipline and its importance to the military profession.

The second objective was to give the new soldier the fundamental skills he needed to fight and win on the battlefield. This meant teaching the soldier how to maintain and fire the M1 rifle, the basic techniques of fire and maneuver, basic first aid, fieldcraft, and communications skills. In 1946 this seventeen-week program was cut by over one-half to eight weeks.³⁴ Worse than the shortening of the training cycle, however, was the 1948 decision that sent soldiers from reception centers in the United States to units performing occupation duty in Japan without any basic training.³⁵ Developing the basic combat skills these soldiers required imposed significant burdens on commanders who were performing other missions. In 1949, the length of basic training for some soldiers was increased to fourteen weeks.³⁶ This basic training did not, however, include any branch-specific training. This meant that noninfantry soldiers who did not attend

technical schools arrived in their units without the basic skills their military occupational specialty required. Just as the length of basic training increased for some soldiers, it was shortened for others. For soldiers who qualified for technical service schools, the revised basic-training program was reduced to six weeks.³⁷ Any additional training the soldier required would either be taught in his technical course or after graduation by his unit of assignment.

Just as the length of the basic training cycle was inadequate, so too was the allocation of training material. For the non-infantry trainee, the ammunition allocation for basic training was limited to between 280 and 450 rounds for the M1 rifle, 210 rounds for the M1917 .30 machine gun, 1/50th of a rifle smoke grenade, 1/50th of a star-cluster and 1/50th of an antipersonnel mine. Allocations of fractional amounts of ordnance were based on demonstration requirements. It was believed that if fifty soldiers observed a smoke grenade, star cluster, or mine detonation all fifty would derive the same training benefit. For the infantrymen, the allocation was a little better. The infantryman would fire between 910 and 1,410 rifle rounds, 400 and 500 M1917 machine-gun rounds, and 30 .50 M2 heavy barrel machine-gun rounds. For crew-served weapons, the allocations were scarcely better than what the soldier's armor, artillery, engineer, or other branch counterpart received. An allocation of 1/50 of a 2.36-inch antitank rocket (bazooka), ten 60-millimeter mortar rounds, 1/20 of a 4.2-inch-mortar round, and 1/25th of a trip-wired booby trap rounded out the ammunition allocation.³⁸ The effect of this shortage was to give the average soldier some exposure, but no real skill, with the tools of his trade. Additionally, the limited exposure was not adequate to acquaint the new soldier with the

sights, sounds, and smells of the battlefield. These shortcomings would have a significant effect on the soldier when he was committed to combat in Korea.

Post-World War II training of new soldiers was also degraded by a lack of standardization within the institutional training base. Between 1947 and 1950, eight different divisions located on eight different installations had responsibility for training new enlistees.³⁹ As with the Army as a whole during this period, there was a great deal of change in the replacement training base with only four of the eight installations retaining the training mission for the entire period. Forts Knox, Ord, Riley, and Dix served as replacement training centers from July 1947 through the beginning of the Korean War.⁴⁰ Fort Dix experienced some disruption in its training activities with the closure of a subpost, Camp Kilmer, that reduced its capability by 50 percent in 1949.⁴¹ The remaining installations--Fort Jackson and Camps Breckenridge, Chaffee, and Pickett--operated as training centers for periods ranging from ten months (Breckenridge) to thirty-three months (Jackson).⁴² This opening and closing of training centers had the unintended consequence of undermining training by employing individuals who often lacked experience. This was particularly true of individuals assigned training responsibilities at Camps Breckenridge and Pickett--the two shortest-lived training centers.

The lack of standardized programs of instruction and allocations of training ammunition aside, it was inevitable that variations in the execution of the training program appeared. The combination of installation-unique range and training area limitations, the quality of the trainers, and the involvement of responsible officers all served to create unique approaches to the task of training new enlistees. The frequency

and type of testing the basic trainee experienced varied widely based on both his training program (six or fourteen week) and the installation conducting the training. Some soldiers were tested weekly, others at the end of the training cycle. Often, the testing itself was artificial in that it was conducted on a parade ground as opposed to a field-training environment.⁴³

If the institutional training program met the basic requirements for the Army of Occupation, it was deficient in meeting the soldier's basic requirements once he arrived in Korea. In early 1951, the Personnel Research Section, Adjutant General's Office, interviewed a number of soldiers who had fought as infantrymen in Korea during the first six months of the war (June through December). Of significance are the responses of soldiers in pay grades E1 through E4. This is the population that would have gone through basic training in the period 1947 through 1950. Forty-three percent of these soldiers identified weapons training as a major weakness. Many soldiers found themselves assigned to duties requiring the use of weapons that they either had not seen in basic training or received minimal instruction on while completing basic training. Specific responses to the question "What did you learn in combat that you should have been taught before?" included "Half the guys didn't know what overhead cover was," "never saw a mortar before combat [but, I] was put right in a mortar squad as a gunner," and "we should have been under mortar fire and see it ain't so bad." Additional comments made by respondents included the need for discipline and the prompt obedience to orders issued by noncommissioned officers.⁴⁴

The Army's post-World War II individual training and replacement system did not meet the needs of either the soldier or the service. The lessons that should have been

learned during World War II went either unlearned or were cast aside in an era where fiscal considerations took priority. A flawed perception of the evolving security environment and a perception that placed little likelihood on ground combat over the near term made it possible to either reduce or eliminate basic training for new enlistees. As the Army realized that its basic training program was deficient, it attempted to correct the weaknesses. A lack of stability in the training base and a shortage of training aids, most notably ammunition, failed to completely overcome the key weaknesses. The cumulative effect of these weaknesses was the creation of a soldier who lacked both the basic tactical skills and discipline to serve effectively as a member of a small infantry unit. With the wholesale transfer of personnel from noncombat to combat units to fill vacancies in those units, this individual weakness served to have a debilitating effect on the performance of the Army's most important tactical organizations--its platoons and companies.

While trained and disciplined soldiers represent the Army's single-greatest asset, such soldiers are of limited value if they are not properly equipped to execute the mission they are assigned. The Army that entered Korea was sorely lacking that equipment. The austere budgets of the Truman administration both precluded the procurement of new weapons and impaired the Army's ability to develop and maintain both its critical reserve equipment and ammunition stocks. The rise of airpower-based war plans to counter the growing Soviet threat gave priority to Air Force development over the modernization of the Army's ground forces. This allowed the ongoing development of weapons to take place without the actual procurement of those weapons. The perception that major conflict, if it occurred, would occur in Europe also served to shape the Army's plans for

fielding weapons. These were among several factors that played a role in determining the quantity and quality of the Army's equipment through the post-World War II period.

The rapid demobilization of the Army following Japan's defeat had a number of unintended consequences. One of those that affected the Army's equipment program was the actual location and condition of many of the Army's major equipment end items in the Pacific Theater. In the Pacific, the war had been fought across hundreds of islands. Throughout the war, equipment remained with the soldiers who remained on those islands. With demobilization, however, the personnel who maintained the equipment departed while the equipment itself often did not. The effect of this was that much of the Army's major equipment was abandoned, often with little attempt to preserve the equipment, in a broad arc extending from New Guinea to the Philippine Islands. With peacetime budgets precluding the purchase of new equipment, the Army began the slow process of surveying and then salvaging the equipment it could to provide the means of equipping its forces that still remained in the Pacific.⁴⁵ Throughout the late 1940s the Army slowly gathered the equipment that could be repaired and shipped it to Tokyo for overhaul. Among the most-important items thus returned to operational condition were M4 Sherman tanks.⁴⁶ The first fifty-four tanks that deployed to Korea were products of this salvage and reconditioning program.⁴⁷ Lacking the ability to assign these tanks to any units in Japan based on the decision to equip the four tank companies in Japan with the lighter M24 Walker Bulldog tank, these tanks went from rebuild into storage. In addition to these Sherman tanks, three M26 Pershing tanks that had been rebuilt in Tokyo were also deployed.

In some respects these, M26 tanks are a better indicator than written or statistical reports of the Army's equipment situation as all three tanks were destroyed either by the enemy or by their crews following catastrophic maintenance breakdowns stemming from the lack of proper repair parts.⁴⁸ One of the great tragedies of the early days of the war was the loss of these tanks due to the inability of maintenance crews to obtain the most mundane of parts: correct fan belts for the engines. Forced to use a larger belt that tended to slip, all of these tanks ultimately overheated. Reduced to pillboxes, they were either destroyed by T34/85 tank main gunfire or destroyed by their crews to prevent capture. Tank engine fan belts were among the many "mundane" items the Army needed to have available to keep its major end items operational. The problems with parts were not confined to tanks. Other weapons systems were also affected. Of the EUSA's 18,000 jeeps, some 10,000 were considered unserviceable by the spring of 1950. Of 13,870 long-bed 2 ½-ton trucks only 4,441 were serviceable. As with the M26 Pershings, the correct parts were not available to allow either the Far East Command's troop units or the Tokyo Ordnance Depot to restore the equipment to a serviceable condition.⁴⁹ Similarly, parts shortages existed for virtually all small arms and communications equipment.⁵⁰ The Army's decision to not adequately resource its Far East Command with spare parts largely determined the equipment status for the Eighth Army's troop units.

As the Army struggled with the issues associated with resupplying the Far East Command with spare parts, so too did it struggle with ammunition stores. During the Second World War, the Army spent a great deal of time and money developing improved antitank weapons in an effort to upgrade its antitank capabilities. Throughout the war in Europe the United States Army routinely faced tanks enjoying much better armor

protection than their own. By the end of the war the Army had developed an effective means of destroying heavy armor--the 105-millimeter high-explosive antitank (HEAT) round. It had also laid the foundations for a 3.5-inch rocket launcher (bazooka).⁵¹ Both of these weapons were more than capable of penetrating the armor of the Soviet-built T34 tank. Infantry units equipped with these rocket launchers could, with justification, be considered antitank units. Likewise, the 105-millimeter HEAT round gave field artillery battalions a means to stop any armored attack. Failing to consider the possibility of tank combat in Japan or the possibility that it might have to fight elsewhere in the Pacific, the Army stockpiled just eighteen 105-millimeter HEAT rounds in ammunition supply points in Japan.⁵² Compounding this error the Army did not field any 3.5-inch bazookas in the Far East Command. Instead, it equipped the Far East Command with the earlier 2.36-inch bazooka.⁵³ By the end of the Second World War, the Army recognized this weapon was ineffective against heavily armored vehicles. Despite that knowledge, it was decided to retain this weapon and relatively large stocks of ammunition for it in Japan.

The Department of the Army's manning, organization, training, and equipment decisions in the immediate post-World War II period significantly shaped the force that deployed to Korea in the summer of 1950. A personnel system that was in near constant turmoil represented the single largest inhibitor to combat effectiveness. This system meant that there was little stability in units. The frequent changeover of personnel, in many cases key leaders, meant units never had a chance to develop the collective competence they required. Once war came, the decision to fracture units to provide individual replacements to the EUSA served to dilute the effectiveness of the Army as a

whole. Individual replacements meant that virtually all-collective training previously conducted ceased to have any value.

The Army's organizational decisions also shaped the force in a significant way. The 1948 infantry division table of organization represented a unit that, at strength, would have been ideal for combat in Korea. The unit had the correct mix of howitzer and mortars required to provide effective fire support in mountainous terrain and the tanks necessary to counter armor threats. Likewise, the number of machine guns was increased in the rifle battalions to allow battalions to employ a heavy base of fire. The antiaircraft battalion was similarly equipped with a large number of heavy machine guns in multiple mounts on self-propelled chassis. The decision to man all these units at less than full strength served to deny these units the opportunity to train themselves for war. The "downsizing" of the tank, antiaircraft, and artillery battalions meant that neither these soldiers nor their commanders ever gained the full benefits of training. The Army had gambled that reduced manning would be sufficient to meet the challenges of both peacetime and short periods of combat.⁵⁴ This was a gamble the Army lost.

Providing the linkage between manning and organization, the Army's institutional training program also shaped the force as a whole. Throughout the immediate post-World War II period, this system was characterized by a great deal of turbulence. The changes in personnel, in locations, and in programs of instruction all served to degrade the effectiveness of the program. Had the Army elected to maintain the wartime seventeen-week program of instruction, it is likely that a greater number of junior soldiers would have found themselves in Korea with better skills. Equally important, the noncommissioned officers in the Army's field forces would have had a better

understanding of what their new charges could and could not do. This knowledge could have provided clearer insight as to what specific training was required to turn the new soldier into an effective member of a squad or platoon. Instead, the constant changes served to magnify the problems produced by personnel turbulence by providing an inconsistent product.

Finally, some key equipment decisions could be considered to be among the most critical decisions of the war. In not providing either 105-millimeter HEAT ammunition in sufficient quantities or in fielding the 3.5-inch antitank rocket to EUSA, the service failed to meet its obligation to the soldier by not giving him the tools required to accomplish his mission. Less dramatic, but equally significant, was the decision to limit replacement parts flow to the Far East Command. This decision significantly reduced the available motor transport for the Eighth Army. Additionally, it served to degrade the effectiveness of the armored force at a time when, quite literally, every tank counted.

The combined effects of the Department of the Army's decisions, coupled with the decisions and actions of the Truman administration, would define the limits of possibility for the Far East Command and the EUSA. For Generals Douglas MacArthur and Walton Walker, options and outcomes were defined by the intertwined effects of these decisions and by the resources they served to provide for employment in Korea.

¹James F. Schnabel, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1996), 109; and Shelby Stanton, *World War II Order of Battle* (New York: Galahad Books, 1984), 45-186.

²Schnabel, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 109; John C. Sparrow, *History of Personnel Demobilization in the United States Army*, facsimile ed. (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1994; Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1952), 267; and Harry S. Truman, *Public Papers of the President, 1946*, 47.

³Office of the Secretary of Defense, *First Report of the Secretary of Defense*, (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1948), 143; John M. Kendall, *An Inflexible Response: US Army Manpower Mobilization Policies, 1945-1957* (Raleigh-Durham: Duke University, History Department, 1982), 263; and Schnabel, 109.

⁴Sparrow, 311-316.

⁵*Ibid.*, 153.

⁶*Ibid.*, 328; and William Manchester, *The Glory and the Dream: A Narrative History of America, 1932-1972*, vol. 1 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1972), 497.

⁷Sparrow, 266; and Kendal 263.

⁸Sparrow, 266. See also Manchester, 499. Manchester describes in general terms the condition of morale and efficiency within the Far East Command by describing the 18,000-soldier protest in Manila, the Philippines, stemming from the ill-advised address of LTG W. D. Styer.

⁹Sparrow, 274-276.

¹⁰Schnabel, 109.

¹¹Kendall, 69.

¹²*Ibid.*, 69.

¹³William T. Bowers, *Black Soldier, White Army* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1996), 35, 61-62; J. Lawton Collins (GEN, USA RET), *Lighting Joe: An Autobiography* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 356; David Detzer, *Thunder of the Captains: The Short Summer of 1950* (New York: Crowell, 1977), 31; and Callum A. MacDonald, *Korea: The War Before Viet Nam* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 203.

¹⁴Bowers, 62.

¹⁵Department of the Army, *Post War Report of the Army Ground Forces* (Washington, DC: Army Field Forces, 1949), 50.

¹⁶Office of the Secretary of the Army, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Army, 1948* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1949), 142.

¹⁷Uzal Ent (BG PA ARNG, RET) *Fighting on the Brink: The Defense of the Pusan Perimeter* (Paducah: Turner Publishing, 1996), 10-11; and James F. Schnabel, *The US Army in the Korean War, Policy and Direction: The First Year* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1972), 54.

¹⁸Bowers, 47-48.

¹⁹MG William F. Dean, *General Dean's Story* (New York: Viking Press, 1954), 8; Office of the Secretary of the Army, *Report of the Secretary of the Army, 1949* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1950) 136; Schnabel, *Policy and Direction: The First Year*, 53; and Charles E. Heller and William A. Stofft, *America's First Battles: 1776-1965* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1986), 269.

²⁰Roy E. Appleman, *The US Army in the Korean War: South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1961), 53; Bowers, 47; and Schnabel, *Policy and Direction: The First Year*, 53.

²¹Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War* (New York: Times Books, 1987), Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 53, and John B. Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower: The Evolution of Divisions and Separate Brigades* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1998), 239.

²²Office of the Secretary of the Army, *Annual Report, July 1, 1949*, 136.

²³Ent, 128-129; T. R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War: A Study in Un-preparedness* (Dulles: Brassey's, 1998), 108; and Terrance J. Gough, *US Army Mobilization and Logistics for the Korean War* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1987), 42.

²⁴Gough, 42.

²⁵Ent, 123-128.

²⁶Wilson, 222-225.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 183.

²⁸Stanton, 5, 19; and Wilson, 184.

²⁹Wilson, 226.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 227; and CPT John Brinkley, USA, "History of US Army Force Restructuring 1939-1961" (Combat Studies Institute, US Army Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 1979), 13.

³¹Wilson, 227.

³²Omar N. Bradley (GA USA), *A General's Life: The Autobiography by General of the Army Omar N. Bradley* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 106.

³³Bowers, 29.

³⁴Blair, 28; and Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 45.

³⁵Ent, 42.

³⁶Blair, 28; and Bowers 29.

³⁷Department of the Army, *Conference on Individual Training and Evaluation Procedures for Individual Training* (Ft. Monroe, VA: Army Ground Forces, 1950), 17, 28.

³⁸Department of the Army, *31st and 47th Infantry Divisions: Commanders' Training Conference 28-29 DEC 50*. Annex I to ATP 21-110N (Ft. Monroe: Army Field Forces, 12 June 1950).

³⁹Wilson, 222.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Office of Secretary of the Army, *Annual Report, 1949*, 139; and Wilson, 222.

⁴²Wilson, 222.

⁴³Department of the Army, *Conference*, 28, 38.

⁴⁴*Strengths and Weakness of Pre-combat Infantry Training as Reported by Combat Infantrymen in Korea* (Washington, DC: Personnel Research Section, Adjutant General's Office, 1952), 6, I-VII.

⁴⁵James A. Huston, *Guns and Butter, Powder and Rice: US Army Logistics in the Korean War* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press), 25.

⁴⁶Simon Dunston, *Armour of the Korean War* (London: Osprey, 1982), 4; Huston, 35, 176. In Chapter 9 of *Guns and Butter, Powder and Rice*, Huston describes in detail the impact of the rebuild program in Japan. Of the 787 tanks that were shipped from Japan to Korea during the period July 1950 through July 1951 some 354 were made available through the rebuild program.

⁴⁷Dunston, 4.

⁴⁸Ibid., 5; and Ent 52.

⁴⁹Huston, 34-35.

⁵⁰Blair, 50; and Ent 43, 150.

⁵¹Huston, 78.

⁵²Appleman, 68; and Fehrenbach, 66.

⁵³Appleman, 72; Collins, 67; Fehrenbach, 67; and Huston, 78-79.

⁵⁴Office of the Secretary of the Army, *Annual Report, 1949*, 136.

CHAPTER 4

THE EIGHTH US ARMY IN JAPAN

In every conflict the United States has fought since the Civil War, the lion's share of the fighting has fallen to a small number of organizations. In the Spanish-American War, it was the expedition to the Philippines that bore the brunt of the fighting. Although the fighting against Spain ended in 1898, pacification activities kept the Army engaged through 1913. In the wake of Mexican governmental instability and Pancho Villa's incursions into the United States, it fell to General John J. Pershing and the regular cavalry units of the Army to execute the punitive expedition to capture Villa and demonstrate that the borders of the United States were inviolate. Through World War I, the burden fell to a few divisions that had gained notoriety for their battlefield performance, notably the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 42nd Divisions. Collectively, these four divisions suffered almost 27 percent of all combat fatalities and over 29 percent of all combat wounds suffered by American forces during the war.¹ In World War II, the burden fell first to the 1st Infantry and 2nd Armored Divisions in North Africa and then to the I Corps in New Guinea. Later still, it fell to the V and VII corps in Europe for the landing and subsequent breakout from Normandy and the drive across France and into Germany. In the Pacific, the 7th Infantry Division and the V Amphibious Corps shouldered much of the load. In Korea, the burden fell to the EUSA. While the Air Force played an important role in concert with carrier-based naval aviation, Korea, in the end, proved to be an infantry fight--with EUSA doing the fighting. By the time the armistice was signed in 1953 after three years of brutal fighting, EUSA was a well-functioning organization that was well supplied, well trained, and well led. This iteration

of EUSA was very different from the army that initially landed in Korea in the summer of 1950 with obsolete and ill-maintained equipment and suffering from the cumulative effects of minimal training, high personnel turnover, and poor leadership.

In this chapter, EUSA's preparations for combat during the period 1946 through 1950 will be examined. This examination will show that EUSA was unready for any form of combat, in Japan or elsewhere, when it deployed its first units to Korea. The routine personnel and training decisions of EUSA will be examined to illuminate how EUSA assessed its own missions and priorities throughout the period of occupation. The effects of the manning, training, and equipment decisions described in chapters 2 and 3 will be articulated to provide a clear understanding of EUSA's true capabilities on the eve of combat, particularly in terms of the actual resources available to the command. The state of leadership in EUSA in Japan will also be described as it largely shaped EUSA's initial combat performance. Finally, this chapter will also show that, between the North Korean attack on 25 June 1950 and the deployment of its first units, decisions made by the Far East Command and EUSA served to further erode the already thin capabilities of EUSA at a time when such erosion could be least afforded.

At the end of World War II EUSA was preparing for Operation Coronet, part of Operation Downfall, the actual invasion of the Japanese home islands.² The successful employment of the atomic bomb against Japan rendered Coronet unnecessary, and EUSA found its mission changed from a 1946 invasion of Japan to the September 1945 occupation of the country instead. As one of the two armies charged with occupation, EUSA's primary responsibility entailed demilitarizing Japan. Between the beginning of occupation and the deactivation of the Sixth US Army some four months later, Army

troops seized and destroyed millions of firearms, thousands of artillery pieces, and hundreds of tanks.³ In so doing, they effectively neutralized any chance of forcible opposition to the occupation by the Japanese. As this process was being carried out, the Army was also conducting its own demobilization. By the time the seizure and destruction of “all Japanese installations that had contributed to the nation’s war effort” was completed, the troops of EUSA had been almost completely rotated out.⁴ The overwhelming majority of the experienced troops who had successfully battled the Japanese across the Philippine Islands had been replaced with fresh troops arriving from training centers in the United States. The effect of this personnel rotation was a change in the basic character of EUSA. The EUSA’s senior leadership and staff remained, as did the colors of the divisions that had defeated the Japanese. Beneath both, however, existed a large body of soldiers that lacked the experience, the discipline, and the judgment of their predecessors. It was this type of soldier that provided the manpower for EUSA as it made the transition in 1946 from combat organization to constabulary, and that manpower pool was exceptionally unstable.

All through the post-World War II period, EUSA found itself facing a range of personnel issues. Some of these stemmed directly from the Army’s authorized strength. Still others stemmed from the Army’s existing segregation policies. Additionally, some could be deemed “self-inflicted,” as either the Far East Command or EUSA decided to redirect the assignments of personnel within Japan to meet self-generated requirements. The combination of demobilization of experienced personnel and the arrival of replacements gave the Far East Command a strength of 300,000 troops in January 1947--100,000 troops fewer than when it first arrived in Japan.⁵ Just eighteen months later, the

Far East Command strength would stand at 132,000 troops--a loss of more than 50 percent.⁶ Just as the Far East Command's strength suffered, so did EUSA. By April 1948 it had only 45,561 troops assigned against an authorized strength of 87,215.⁷ In real terms this meant nine rifle battalions--the basic combat formation--were deactivated.⁸ This reduction was the equivalent to the infantry strength of a division. As the occupation continued, the strength continued to decline. Throughout 1948 and 1949, infantry division strengths varied between 10,300 soldiers (7th ID) and 13,000 soldiers (25th ID) with a wartime requirement of 18,900 soldiers per division.⁹ These "present for duty" numbers are somewhat misleading, however, in that those personnel who were assigned as "special duty" troops continued to be counted against strength authorization of the actual unit of assignment.

The steep decline in troop authorizations had four significant effects on EUSA. First, it introduced an exceptionally high degree of turbulence within the force. This served to markedly reduce the number of soldiers available in EUSA's infantry companies and battalions. Between the deletion of planned replacements and the detailing of troops for special duty assignments (often in honor guards, sports teams, or headquarters staff sections) line companies frequently operated at less than 50 percent of their authorized strength.¹⁰ This exceptionally low manning level served to prevent units from developing any real proficiency in the collective tasks that formed the basis for combat efficiency. Compounding this problem, many of the lowest-ranking soldiers were products of abbreviated basic training programs. For infantry units, in which virtually all tasks are collective tasks, this lack of even basic skills created significant problems. Second, it forced EUSA to deactivate a number of organizations--notably

corps headquarters and the related signal companies--that provided support.¹¹ When hostilities erupted, the absence of these units would significantly affect EUSA's ability to exercise command and control over its combat formations. By the time the Korean War began, the total strength of the Army's Far East Command stood at only 108,000 troops.¹² These 108,000 troops, who had been spread thinly across Japan, would form the core of America's initial commitment of troops to Korea.

Third, in a preview of the early days of the all-volunteer Army of the 1970s, the service was required to retain substandard soldiers whose daily performance was prejudicial to good order and discipline. In an era when good jobs with good pay were offered in the civilian sector, and occupation duty in Japan could be described as "I&I"--"intoxication and intercourse"--EUSA made do with whatever soldiers came its way. While it would be grossly unfair to characterize every enlisted soldier in EUSA as a troublemaker, the reality is that the easy lifestyle in EUSA created tremendous distractions for some soldiers. Duty requirements were not particularly onerous, and a soldier's paycheck went a long way. This environment, coupled with the high turnover of leaders, particularly noncommissioned officers, created opportunities for EUSA's lower enlisted soldiers. As a result, company-level commanders spent a great deal of time dealing with discipline problem soldiers who would have been better served by a discharge. In the 24th Infantry Division, a soldier required five courts-martial convictions before he could be discharged.¹³ In the 25th Infantry Division, the 24th Infantry Regiment was forced to retain soldiers who were heroin addicts until the Criminal Investigation Division was persuaded to launch drug eradication efforts in late

1949.¹⁴ The unfortunate, yet pervasive, attitude was that a bad soldier was better than no soldier. Clean, addicted, disciplined, undisciplined--EUSA had requirements for all.

Finally, the combination of reduced military positions in the Far East Command and EUSA, coupled with a decreasingly qualified pool of technically trained soldiers, meant that many of the technical jobs formerly done by soldiers were performed by an increasingly large Japanese civilian work force.¹⁵ This reliance on a civilian work force for many functions enhanced the ability of EUSA to perform its constabulary mission. In the event of hostilities, however, EUSA would lack the technical military skills required to effectively provide combat service support to its combat formations without significant assistance. So long as the assumptions of OPLAN Off Tackle and its various permutations remained valid, this would not subject EUSA to any operational risk. Should Off Tackle's assumptions be proven incorrect, EUSA's ability to generate and sustain combat forces would be impaired.

In summary, EUSA's personnel situation could be most succinctly described as "chaotic." Charged with a terrain-oriented mission (maintaining presence throughout the Japanese home islands) that never really decreased as personnel accounts drew down, the command attempted to perform its range of occupation duties by dissipating its limited personnel strength throughout Japan. The risks associated with such an unstable personnel environment were considered acceptable. As a result, units continued to become leaner and leaner, irrespective of the potential long-term effects of such personnel policies. Despite this continuing erosion, no effort was made to deactivate units or consolidate personnel into a smaller number of fully manned units. Additionally, EUSA retained soldiers whose demonstrated duty performance was inconsistent with

good order and discipline. As long as EUSA had only to concern itself with constabulary duties in Japan, a country that had demonstrated a high degree of docility following the end of the war, there was little impetus to change EUSA's organizational structures or policies. The existing system, while far from perfect, met EUSA's immediate requirements. That was sufficient for General Douglas MacArthur, Commanding General of the Far East Command.

Just as personnel policies changed throughout EUSA's tour of occupation in Japan, so too did training policies. When the command followed the 4th Marines ashore in 1945, EUSA was a combat organization with a combat mission--that of disarming its vanquished foe. Rapidly completing that mission, EUSA transitioned to the constabulary. Many of its missions were nothing more than guard-type duties of key facilities with the "be prepared to" mission of riot suppression. In 1949, as the evolving nature of the Soviet threat became clearer, EUSA developed training plans aligned with the doctrinal missions of its infantry battalions and regiments.¹⁶ Even this training plan was predicated on the assumption, however, that any action involving EUSA would be an action taking place within Japan. While it was fairly easy for MacArthur to direct a credible training program for EUSA, it was far more difficult to create one, particularly when the issues of available personnel, resources, and training areas are considered. To understand the state of combat readiness in EUSA, it is necessary to understand the training priorities and the impediments that served to prevent EUSA from satisfying those priorities as it attempted to create some semblance of combat efficiency.

Essentially, EUSA had two different training priorities during the post-World War II period. From its arrival until its turning over police responsibilities to the Japanese in

April 1949, EUSA's training focus was on garrison and constabulary tasks.¹⁷ That meant that instead of rigorous field training, training would be classroom-type instruction with an emphasis on discipline, courtesy, and conduct.¹⁸ The "performance-oriented" evaluation of such training could be easily determined at a regimental or battalion guard mount. Should the most serious lapses of discipline occur while performing official duties, the offender could look forward to a term of imprisonment of up to five years.¹⁹ Guard duty, conduct, and discipline formed the core of EUSA's day-to-day training schedules. This very narrow and very simple training was easily supported even in a period of personnel turbulence. All that was really required was a corporal who knew how to read a few uniform regulations and who could recite the "General Orders" of sentries.

In April 1949, EUSA issued new training directives based on the Japanese assuming responsibility for policing the islands and the deteriorating situation with the Soviet Union.²⁰ The new training directives called for an increase in collective training within EUSA's combat units. To achieve the required level of combat proficiency, units would go through a series of field training exercises, beginning at platoon level and then working up to a "capstone" exercise involving the division as a whole. EUSA expected companies to satisfactorily complete formally graded company training by December 1949, battalion-level training in May 1950, regimental combat team-level training in July 1950, and the division-level exercise by the end of December 1950.²¹ This was an ambitious training program that was doomed to fail from the start.

EUSA's personnel problems served as a significant inhibitor to effective training. The 1950 edition of FM 7-40, *The Infantry Battalion*, provided a training plan deemed

adequate to bring a unit to the proficiency required to pass the battalion test.²² This training plan provided for four-hour blocks of instruction in such tasks as serving as the advance guard of a regiment in the attack, occupation and organization of a daylight defensive position, a daylight delay, a daylight withdrawal, and the reorganization of a daylight defensive position. Lacking competent trainers, with many officer assignments almost “transient” in nature due to the competitive tour program, infantry units frequently lacked the skilled leadership required to effectively train these tasks. This training weakness was magnified by the presence of essentially untrained personnel who had arrived as graduates of the abbreviated post-World War II basic training programs. Even those personnel who arrived with acceptable skills were apt to find those skills had eroded after a few months of occupation duty. Just as EUSA’s units had difficulty in training specific tasks, they also had difficulty in successfully internalizing some of FM 7-40’s guiding principles. These principles included training leader development, developing a sense of unit loyalty and teamwork, and building on previous training.²³ EUSA’s training directive was logical and specified a theoretically possible end state. The reality, however, was that EUSA lacked the personnel required to achieve that end state. In the words of one weapons company commander from the 17th Infantry

Regiment:

From December 1949 through June 1950 I was never able to muster more than 48 men (out of a TOE strength of 163 troops with 63 men actually assigned). We had to juggle men from machine guns to recoilless rifles to mortars for our annual tests. Needless to say, we did poorly. The balance of my assigned strength was away on other duty type activities. They were on detached service, by orders of higher authority, performing duties which had nothing to do with the weapons company.²⁴

EUSA's subordinate units were not the only ones that had difficulty training. When the EUSA headquarters deployed itself to the field shortly after General Walton Walker assumed command, it found it took as long as three days to get communications, tents, and rations synchronized to the point where the staff could talk to each other, sleep, and eat without relying on commercial sources. Through repeated attempts at deploying its command post, EUSA finally was able to deploy its headquarters and operate effectively by June 1950. Its divisional counterparts would never achieve the same ability while in Japan.²⁵

Personnel shortfalls were not EUSA's only significant inhibitor to effective training. Almost as significant a problem as personnel was the shortage of training areas. During World War II, Japanese conquests had given the country the ability to import food from the conquered territories of Asia. With the country defeated, it relied primarily on food grown within the archipelago to feed its people. To accomplish this, crops were planted wherever possible. This practice meant that many training areas that had existed for the Imperial Army were simply not available for the United States Army.²⁶ While such training as machine-gun or mortar crew drill could be conducted in any of the camps EUSA occupied, any battalion- or regimental-level training had to be conducted at the Fuji Training Area.²⁷ This same training area was the major artillery range for all the artillery in Japan. This reliance on a single major training area for infantry, artillery, and tank training meant that units had limited opportunities to train, as other units were waiting their turn. Additionally, before a regiment could complete its regimental test, its subordinate battalions had to successfully complete theirs. With the battalion test failure rate approaching 20 percent, it was perhaps inevitable that regimental combat team

testing would not be realized in accordance with the original training directives.²⁸ There were quite simply too many units competing for too little training area. The objective was to overcome four years of training neglect in a single year. This goal was simply beyond the resources available to EUSA.

While effective training requires competent leaders, available soldiers, and training areas, performance-oriented training also requires the soldier's tools. In this case the required tools were the weapons, communications equipment, and other items the soldier uses routinely in performing his battlefield mission. For EUSA, usable equipment represented another major problem. While the effects of post-World War II appropriations were felt throughout the Army, it could be argued that they were felt most acutely in EUSA. The nation's evolving security strategy was geared to containing the Soviet Union in Europe. To accomplish this goal, Europe (both the rearming European allies and the US forces stationed there), Nationalist China (until its evacuation to Formosa), and the French forces beginning a fight against a communist-led insurgency in French Indochina had the priority on available equipment.²⁹

For EUSA, this meant that the type, condition, and quantities of equipment would remain well below what was needed for effective training. EUSA's weapons companies were authorized 226 57-millimeter M18 recoilless rifles by the existing tables of organization. The number of serviceable M18s was eleven. To try and compensate for this lack of required equipment, the command also had ten unserviceable T15E13s, an older and less capable weapon.³⁰ This was less than 5 percent of the command's requirement. This shortage would prove to be a critical weakness in training, as

recoilless rifles represented a significant portion of an infantry battalion's antiarmor capability.

EUSA's on-hand tank strength was scarcely better. The tables of organization called for a tank company in each regiment and a tank battalion in each division. Instead, the command possessed only 103 M24 light tanks and 25 M4 Sherman tanks.³¹ This was enough to outfit eight tank companies against a stated requirement of twenty-one. In terms of training impact, this meant that the combined arms training that developed effective tank-infantry teams was not conducted. Neither tankers nor infantrymen possessed the skills needed to effectively maneuver as a single unit against an enemy when they were deployed to Korea.

Weaknesses in combined arms and antiarmor training were not the only equipment-driven problems with the EUSA training plan. Poor maintenance of other equipment was also a major contributing factor. EUSA's inspector general reports indicate that in some infantry units up to 80 percent of the radios were not operational, that communications field wire was in bad condition with excessive breaks and splices, that batteries were unserviceable, that the majority of the command's wheeled vehicles were unserviceable, and that throughout EUSA rifles lacked firing pins and crew-served weapons were missing.³² Such problems degraded a unit's ability to train by denying it the opportunity to properly position its weapons. Further, they served to prevent its leaders from acquiring the tactical and technical skills necessary to effectively employ them once they were positioned.

A more egregious problem than the poor condition of training equipment was the fact that these same broken items were deployed to Korea.³³ While EUSA recognized

that much of its equipment was defective, it was not able to undertake any credible program to replace that equipment before it began deploying units to Korea in July. The broken piece of equipment the soldier supposedly “trained” with became the same equipment he had to rely on once combat was joined.

At its most fundamental levels, EUSA’s training program was flawed. It did not consider the limitations imposed by the high degree of personnel turbulence, the lack of suitable training areas, and the poor condition of its assigned equipment. The cumulative effect of these limitations was the creation of combat units that possessed only the most-rudimentary skills. The majority of the soldiers in an infantry unit could fire their individual weapons. Those assigned duties on crew-served weapons would generally possess less facility with those weapons by virtue of key equipment items being either missing or unserviceable. Units possessed minimum communications skills, as the absence of serviceable radios, batteries, and phone lines served to limit opportunities to practice the installation and employment of tactical communications radio networks and telephone switchboards. The effect of such shortages denied company and battalion commanders the opportunity to train the collective weapons and communications tasks that are essential to small-unit success on the battlefield. General Walker had articulated a clear and desirable end state in preparing his training plan for EUSA. Regrettably, Walker lacked the ability to overcome the significant resource and cultural obstacles that stood in the way of achieving his end state. As a result, EUSA’s training program fell short of its critical objective of developing effective battalions and regimental combat teams.

Personnel and training problems were not the only limitations EUSA faced on the eve of the Korean War. Serious leadership problems existed throughout EUSA, with the weakest leadership frequently found where it was least affordable--in its infantry formations. The leadership problems within EUSA were among the most serious problems the command faced. Strong leadership while EUSA was stationed in Japan could not overcome all the other problems the command faced. It could, however, serve to mitigate the personnel and equipment problems that plagued EUSA. The 1949 edition of FM 100-5, *Operations*, dedicated an entire chapter to leadership and its critical importance in building capable units. Chapter three, "Leadership," drew heavily from the lessons the service learned during World War II. It provided for the Army's commissioned leadership very clear statements regarding what good, effective leadership enabled on the battlefield.

Three of the most telling paragraphs, paragraphs eighty-five, eighty-eight, and ninety-one stated:

Cohesion within a unit is promoted by good leadership, discipline, physical fitness, proficiency in weapons, *sound tactical training*, pride in the accomplishments and reputation of the unit, *mutual confidence* and comradeship among its members, and *knowledge of the tasks to be accomplished by the unit* and by its adjacent and supporting elements [emphasis mine].³⁴

Troops are influenced strongly by the example and conduct of their leaders. *Mutual confidence between the leader and his men is the surest basis for discipline*. To gain this confidence, the leader must find the way to the hearts of his men. This he will do by acquiring an understanding for their thoughts and feelings, and by showing a constant concern for their comfort and welfare [emphasis mine].³⁵

The combat value of a unit is determined in great measure by the soldierly qualities of its leaders and members, and by its will to fight. Outward marks of this combat value will be found in the set-up and appearance of the men, in the condition, care and maintenance of its weapons and equipment, and in the readiness of the unit for action. *Superior combat value will offset numerical*

inferiority. Superior leadership combined with superior combat value of troops equipped with superior weapons constitutes a sure basis for success in battle [emphasis mine].³⁶

The high degree of officer and noncommissioned officer turbulence within EUSA precluded EUSA's leadership from establishing the mutual confidence between the leader and the led that tactical proficiency required. At the lower levels, company commanders frequently completed a "tour" in the position before being afforded the opportunity to conduct any credible training with their troops at the Fuji Training Area. Worse yet was the fate of those company commanders who had not had a chance to fully train their units before they took their turn in the Fuji Training Area. While a lack of trainers contributed to the poor performance of many units in standardized readiness tests, the lack of effective company-level leadership must be considered a significant contributing factor. Underdeveloped leadership at this level served to prevent small units from developing the characteristics that would be required in the event of hostilities.

At the more senior level, EUSA's leadership was also problematic. The majority of the command's regimental commanders was older officers, the average age was forty-eight years, with one regimental commander aged fifty-six, and virtually deaf. Throughout World War II, General of the Army George C. Marshall restricted regimental command to younger officers based on his well-founded belief that the majority of officers who had progressed into middle age lacked the stamina required for regimental command.³⁷

Among the commanding generals of the three EUSA divisions committed to battle, none had commanded in combat during World War II. Major General William Dean of the 24th Infantry Division had spent the war as an assistant division commander.

Major General William Kean had served as both a division and corps chief of staff. Major General Hobart Gay had served as corps chief of staff under General George Patton.³⁸ Of the nine regimental commanders, only one had actually commanded troops in combat during World War II, and eight of the nine had spent the war in Europe. These were senior officers whose experience was primarily in the realm of ensuring that the efforts of coordinating staffs were accomplished, not in building or controlling units. This lack of experience in leading troops in combat, coupled with a “European” perspective of combat, served to create additional barriers to effective leadership.

In the simplest terms, EUSA’s leadership was lacking at virtually every level. At the lowest levels, turbulence prevented cohesive chains of command that could provide the leadership required at the company and platoon level. Within the battalions the parade of company grade officers moving as if on a carousel prevented most battalion commanders from building stable staffs and command teams. At the regimental level, with the exception of Colonel Jay Loveless and the 34th Infantry Regiment, commanders lacked the command experience to effectively train their soldiers while conducting their occupation duties. For the young infantryman, this constant change of leadership meant that he could count on his not being known, understood, or motivated by his officers. Worse, it meant that he would not be able to develop the mutual confidence that FM 100-5 had so clearly articulated as being an important aspect of combat leadership. As long as the mission remained occupation, this lack of confidence would be of minor importance. In the event of combat, however, it could ultimately be a decisive factor. While EUSA’s leaders were aware of that, they took few measures to overcome the

problem. The results of this breakdown in mutual trust and confidence would become apparent with combat in Korea.

The cumulative effects of EUSA's manpower, training, equipment, and leadership problems can be found in the command's own assessment of its combat potential. At the time of the North Korean invasion, EUSA's chief of staff, Major General Ned K. Almond, rated EUSA's overall combat effectiveness at 40 percent. Rating for divisions ranged from a low of 65 percent for the 24th Division to a high of 84 percent for the 1st Cavalry Division.³⁹ With such low effectiveness percentages, it was necessary to make some changes in an effort to improve them. The actions the Far East Command and EUSA undertook, however, ultimately served to further reduce what were already dangerously low levels of effectiveness. Just as the Department of the Army embarked on a crash replacement program, so too did EUSA. Ultimately termed "Operation Flushout," this was a program that took "special duty" soldiers from noncombat "peacetime" positions and reassigned them to combat units as riflemen.⁴⁰ The problem with Flushout was that it also took combat soldiers from one unit and transferred them to another unit. While this action served to fill vacant positions on a table of organization, it did not materially contribute to and quite often detracted from any appreciable increase in the combat effectiveness of the unit receiving the replacement.

Flushout was flawed for two reasons. In the case of noncombat soldiers, units received untrained men with no time to train them before being committed to combat. For many of these soldiers, their only experience in basic infantry skills was what had been provided in basic training. Given the uneven quality of the Army's basic training program in the late 1940s, these soldiers were frequently a liability to their new units.

Untrained, inexperienced, and with no ties to a unit, all of which the Army's own doctrine recognized as important in developing effective units, these soldiers created additional problems for their squad leaders and platoon sergeants. Worse than the problems associated with the overnight reclassification of a signalman, mechanic, or truck driver into an infantryman was the assignment of general prisoners to troop units.⁴¹ The emptying of the "Big Eight" stockade served to return to duty soldiers of a range of military specialties in infantry units. The assignment of men who frequently lacked infantry skills and had serious discipline problems placed even greater demands on the Army's most junior and frequently most inexperienced leadership.

Transferring soldiers from one infantry regiment to another did not materially improve effectiveness either. While the new soldier understood the fundamentals of his duties, he remained a stranger in a new unit with new leadership. The collective training that he had received prior to the transfer, while not completely useless, lost much of its value because the soldier was no longer part of the same small unit. Though the 1st Cavalry Division had the highest combat effectiveness rating of any division in EUSA at the end of June 1950, this rating ceased to have any meaning once the division was used as a replacement pool. Many of the division's infantry units were robbed first of their junior enlisted soldiers to fill vacancies in the 24th Infantry Division, and then they were backfilled with the replacements from technical specialties.⁴² In other cases, the noncommissioned officers were stripped out to fill critical shortages leaving junior soldiers without effective leaders.⁴³ These vacancies would then be filled either by a noncommissioned officer holding a noncombat specialty or by a promotion from within the unit. Numbers increased, but the effectiveness of the division's units decreased.

How, then, can EUSA's actual combat readiness be summarized? The period September 1945 through June 1950 proved to be a period of marked instability for EUSA. The period began with the command preparing for an invasion of Japan and ended with it preparing for what was expected to be a very limited and expected very brief campaign in Korea. While the command was exceptionally well prepared for an invasion of Japan, it was remarkably unprepared for a limited campaign in Korea.

Initially caught up with the problems associated with demobilization following World War II, EUSA never developed any real stability in its units. The cumulative effects of DA policies, such as the Competitive Tour Program, Far East Command requirements, such as providing soldiers in a "special duty" status, and the decision to man a large number of undertrength companies as opposed to a smaller number of better-manned companies, all served to create units that lacked the stability required for any meaningful training. Without meaningful collective training to serve as a foundation, combat units deteriorated rapidly through 1947 into mere aggregations of soldiers. From the end of demobilization until the command deployed to Korea, EUSA was successful in building only one understrength regiment, the 27th Infantry, that could truly be called combat effective.

EUSA's ability to train itself was largely impaired by the unavailability of key personnel, officers, and noncommissioned officers alike. The high degree of personnel turnover meant that meaningful collective training became an elusive goal for the majority of the command's regiments. Only the segregated 24th Infantry Regiment had some degree of stability. Through 1949, the EUSA training program was effective only in training occupation tasks, as those tasks tended to be individual tasks that required few

resources and could be reinforced through the day-to-day performance of occupation duties. With the transition to a training program based on tactical missions, the training conducted proved largely unsuccessful. Units lacked the skilled personnel to effectively train the most-fundamental collective tasks. As a result, there was a high failure rate on readiness tests. This low level of performance served to further increase personnel turbulence as leaders were relieved for such failures.

Exacerbating the problems with personnel stability and qualified trainers was a lack of proper equipment. Throughout demobilization, EUSA's equipment was allowed to seriously erode. With a return to combat training the command found it lacked the critical equipment items required. The Far East Command attempted to compensate for this to some extent through Operation Roll-Up. In the end, however, this did not meet all of EUSA's equipment requirements. The absence of serviceable crew-served weapons, and communications equipment limited training even when the soldiers and trainers were available. EUSA was fully aware of its equipment problems, but was never successful in overcoming them in any meaningful way. As a result, soldiers towed their broken vehicles to railheads and ports for shipment to Korea, slung broken weapons and radios over their shoulders, and boarded planes and ships for the movement to combat. In allowing this to happen, EUSA violated one of the cardinal principles of the 1949 edition of FM 100-5: it allowed soldiers to deploy with inferior equipment.

EUSA's leadership knew its basic problems and knew what needed to happen, but lacked the resources needed to move from "problem identified" to "problem solved." The majority of the senior officers understood what needed to happen but lacked the ability to oversee actions. Weak, almost benign supervision was a common characteristic

and the majority of EUSA's units reflected that oversight. When the crisis finally came, the Far East Command and EUSA exacerbated the leadership problem by rapidly reassigning soldiers to empty paragraph and line numbers on the tables of organization and equipment without allowing those soldiers, both new and old, to develop the mutual trust and confidence that FM 100-5 so clearly spelled out as being essential for battlefield success. While the intent of this action was to compensate for some of the erosion that characterized EUSA, the reality is that this decision served to further erode EUSA's already marginal combat capabilities. The simple reality of the situation was that five years of neglect could not be cured by the sudden transfer of personnel within the Far East Command or EUSA. EUSA's most-serious equipment and strength problems could be corrected, but such correction required resources that were simply not available within the theater and on no notice.

When the Korean War began, EUSA had spent just under five years in Japan. During those five years, it did almost everything but effectively prepare for combat. With the commitment of the command to combat in Korea, it would pay a very high price for its years of neglect and ill-advised, short-term decision making. As is so often the case, the price would be paid not by the Army's senior leadership. Rather, it would be paid by the junior leaders and hastily-assembled troops who would constitute the front line in a series of disappointing engagements that ranged the depth of the ROK in the summer of 1950.

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²Thomas E. Greis, ed., *The Second World War, Military Campaign Atlas*, The West Point Military History Series, vol. 3 (Wayne, NJ: Avery Publishing Company, 1989), Map 50; and Gehard L. Wineberg, *A World at Arms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 873.

³Geoffrey Perret, *Old Soldiers Never Die: The Life of Douglas MacArthur* (Holbrook: Adams Media, 1996), 495.

⁴Ibid, 495; General William Dean, *General Dean's Story* (New York: Viking Press, 1954), 8; Brigadier General Uzal Ent, PA ARNG (RET), *Fighting on the Brink: The Pusan Perimeter* (Paducah: Turner Publishing, 1996), 10; and John C. Sparrow, *A History of Personnel Demobilization in the United States Army*, facsimile ed. (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1994), 270-271.

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⁶Office of the Secretary of the Army, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Army, 1948* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1949), 302; and Schnabel, 52.

⁷Schnabel, 52.

⁸Ent, 10-11.

⁹Charles E. Heller and Brigadier General William A. Stofft, *America's First Battles: 1776-1965* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, 1986), 269; and General Matthew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1967), 34.

¹⁰Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War* (New York: Times Books, 1987), 48; Ent, 11; and Orlando Ward, *Korea, 1950* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1952), 14.

¹¹Blair, 48; and Schnabel, 52.

¹²Schnabel, 52.

¹³Donald Knox, *The Korean War, Pusan to Chosin: An Oral History* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1985), 9.

¹⁴William Bowers, *Black Soldiers, White Army: The 24th Infantry Regiment in the Korean War* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1996), 54.

¹⁵David Detzer, *Thunder of the Captains: The Short Summer in 1950* (New York: Crowell, 1977), 31; and Schnabel, 54.

¹⁶Blair, 48; and Schnabel, 54.

¹⁷Ent, 10; General J. Lawton Collins, *War in Peacetime: History and Lessons of Korea* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1969), 67; and Perret, 495.

¹⁸Bowers, 42; Ent, 8; and Schnabel, 54.

¹⁹William Manchester, *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur, 1880-1964* (New York: Bantam, Doubleday, Dell, 1978), 555.

²⁰Blair, 48; Bowers, 60; and Schnabel, 55.

²¹Ent, 10; and Schnabel, 54.

²²Department of the Army, FM 7-20, *The Infantry Battalion* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1950), 468-473.

²³*Ibid.*, 458.

²⁴Ent, 11.

²⁵Blair, 49.

²⁶Collins, 66.

²⁷Bowers, 63; and Ent, 10.

²⁸Bowers, 63; Collins, 66; and Callum A. MacDonald, *Korea: The War Before Viet Nam* (New York: MacMillan, 1987), 203.

²⁹Roy Appleman, *The US Army in the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1970), 41-42; Ent, 10; MacDonald, 79; and Office of the Secretary of the Army, *Annual Report, 1948*, 195; Office of the Secretary of the Army, *Semi-Annual Report, January 1950-July 1950* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1950), 67.

³⁰James A. Huston, *Guns and Butter, Powder and Rice: US Army Logistics in the Korean War* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1989), 35.

³¹*Ibid.*, 35.

³²Bevin Alexander, *Korea: The First War We Lost* (New York: Hyperion Books, 1986), 51; Appleman, 114; and Bowers, 77.

³³Alexander, 51; Appleman, 113; Bowers, 77; T. R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War: A Study in Unpreparedness* (Dulles, VA: Brassey's, 1994), 68; and William G. Robertson, *Counterattack on the Naktong* (Ft. Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1985), 8.

³⁴Department of the Army, FM 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1950), 18.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶*Ibid.*, 19.

³⁷Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope, 1939-1942* (New York: Viking Press, 1965), 91, 97.

³⁸Ent, 42, 58-62.

³⁹Bowers, 69; John M. Kendall, *An Inflexible Response: United States Army Manpower Mobilization Policies, 1945-1957* (Raleigh: Duke University, 1982), 164; and Schnabel, 56.

⁴⁰Appleman, 59; Fehrenbach, 108; Joseph C. Goulden, *Korea: The Untold Story of the War* (New York: MacGraw-Hill, 1983), 143; and Tomedi, *No Bugles, No Drums: An Oral History of the Korean War* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1993), 9.

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⁴²Fehrenbach, 76-77; and Reese letter.

⁴³Ent, 42; and Fehrenbach, 77.

CHAPTER 5

THE EIGHTH US ARMY IN KOREA

The decisions of government have implications that frequently extend beyond the effects considered by the decision makers. Frequently, those revolving around resource allocation are the ones that have the most far-reaching effects. When such decisions are made, the criterion of “return versus risk” is often employed as one of the most important.

The budget and policy decisions of the President and the Secretaries of Defense (both James Forrestal and Louis Johnson) were not conscious ones to inhibit the Army. Rather, they were ones that considered shortchanging the Army to be the means that represented the best option to provide for the nation’s security. The risk was perceived to be outweighed by the return offered on the decision. Through 25 June 1950 those budget decisions could be considered to be the correct ones. While the nation’s security picture was at times very chaotic, the situation had been contained without committing Army troops to combat. As a result, the risks that General Eisenhower had described to Forrestal and that Forrestal had admitted to himself were not present. The nation’s senior leadership could, with some justification, feel that the national security and budget decisions made were the correct ones. The nation’s economy was booming (and providing proof that Truman’s twenty-one-point plan was working), the relationship with the Soviet Union had stabilized following the lifting of the Berlin blockade, and the recommendations of the Finletter Commission were being employed. In short, everything was going well for the Truman administration. Beginning with the North Korean invasion on 25 June 1950, all of those assumptions began to change.

The risks that Truman, Forrestal, and Johnson accepted were now going to present themselves to a neglected constituency--the EUSA. In this chapter, how the effects of lean budgets, deferred maintenance, substandard training, and poor leadership manifested themselves on the battlefield in Korea are examined. Four infantry regiments and their manner of combat performance during their initial engagements are also examined. In so doing, it will be demonstrated that, as a general rule, the American soldier did all that he could reasonably be expected to do. The poor performance of the soldier and his unit was less a reflection upon himself than upon the senior leadership--both uniformed and civilian--who placed the soldier on the battlefield without the skills, equipment, and leadership he required for effective performance. As has often been the case in the history of the United States Army, the soldier did the best he could with what he had available. Finally, it will be illustrated that the poor corporate performance of these units demonstrate a trend that, with few exceptions, continued to plague EUSA in Korea until after the X Corps successfully executed its landing at Inchon in September 1950.

As the decision to commit troops was a reversal of previously articulated policy, there existed no contingency plans for committing forces. A concept of operations, to include the command and control of forces, was nonexistent. The result of this was the decision to deploy infantry forces with the mission of “stopping” the enemy. The particulars as to where, when, or how were never clearly articulated. What was articulated was the requirement to get troops onto the peninsula, move them forward as far as possible, and then hold as long as possible.¹ Once the North Koreans recognized that they were fighting American soldiers, the enemy would embark on the only sound

course of action: he would break contact and withdraw north of the 38th Parallel--the official boundary between the two Korean states.²

The first American ground combat troops in Korea were a composite group organized around the headquarters of the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment (“The Gimlets”).³ Titled “Task Force Smith” (TF Smith) after the commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Brad Smith, TF Smith consisted of the battalion headquarters company, two rifle companies (Company B and Company C of the 21st Infantry Regiment), a weapons company (Company M of the 21st Infantry Regiment), an artillery firing battery (Battery A, 52d Field Artillery), and artillery headquarters and service elements (headquarters and service batteries, 52d Field Artillery).⁴ The twenty-fifth day of June, the day of the invasion, found the 21st Infantry at its home station of Camp Wood.⁵ Located at Kumamoto on the island of Kyushu, the 21st Infantry represented the closest American combat formation to the Korean mainland. By the Eighth Army’s own reports, the 21st Infantry was one of its least combat-ready organizations. The exigencies of geography were deemed more important than combat readiness. As a result, the composite task force was organized and deployed to Korea. Consisting of 440 men from three different battalions (1st and 3d battalions of the 21st Infantry Regiment and the 52d Field Artillery), T. F. Smith’s equipment included six 105-millimeter howitzers, a platoon of 75-millimeter recoilless rifles, six 2.36-inch antitank rocket launchers (better known as “bazookas”), two 4.2-inch mortars, and four 60-millimeter mortars.⁶ To provide tactical mobility, the artillery elements included seventy-three trucks of various types. Also with the task force were six 105-millimeter, high-explosive antitank (HEAT) rounds, one-third of the total number known to exist in Japan.⁷

Numbers alone, however, do not fully portray the combat potential of TF Smith. To understand its poor battlefield performance, it is necessary to understand the true capabilities of the task force. Lieutenant Colonel Brad Smith was an experienced officer who had commanded an infantry company in Hawaii at the start of World War II and held a number of positions with the 25th Infantry Division throughout the Pacific Theater.⁸ While Smith possessed extensive combat experience, the experience base of his subordinates varied significantly. Among the officers, approximately one-third had seen active combat during World War II.⁹ Roughly one-half of the noncommissioned officers were considered World War II veterans, but many of these men had not seen combat during the war.¹⁰ The majority of the riflemen and artillerymen was postwar recruits who were products of both the Army's postwar institutional training programs and the training programs of EUSA. Roughly 17 percent of the troops had previous combat experience, and the credible training that preceded it.¹¹ For both the leaders and the led, this lack of experience would have a marked effect on the battlefield performance of the task force.

The raw numbers of equipment also fail to provide a clear picture of TF Smith's capabilities. While the number of bazookas, recoilless rifles, and 105-millimeter rounds is impressive, the reality is that, with the exception of the six HEAT rounds, the task force did not possess a credible means of stopping the North Korean T34 tanks. Once the battle was joined, this weakness would also play a major role in determining the outcome of TF Smith's first engagement. Communications equipment was a further weakness. Like the rest of the EUSA's equipment, it was obsolete and unreliable.¹² The communications wire had been cut and spliced repeatedly, and the radios that provided

the key link between companies and the battalion headquarters never received the full maintenance they needed.

If the soldiers of TF Smith had any awareness of the impending impacts of Truman's twenty-one-point reconversion plan, the Finletter Commission, or Operation Fleetwood on their immediate futures they were left unrecorded. Laboring through the night under monsoon skies outside the small village of Osan-Ni, the soldiers prepared positions, ran communications wire, and registered their mortars and artillery as they prepared to meet the enemy. Capitalizing on the terrain, Smith had his men prepare positions on a small hill that both provided clear observation over the valley below and was part of the travel way of the Seoul-Osan road. Several hundred meters back, two of the howitzers were positioned with the six 105-millimeter HEAT rounds. The remaining howitzers were positioned on line approximately 1½ miles to the rear of the infantry's locations. From these positions the task force would be able to visually acquire the enemy early, take him under indirect fires by both the large mortars and the 105-millimeter howitzers, and then apply direct antitank fires against the enemy as he attempted to penetrate the position.¹³

The plan gave Smith's men the advantages of tactical surprise (they would see the enemy before they were seen) and the ability to mass their direct fire weapons. With no antitank mines available to the task force, massed antitank fires would be essential. Properly executed, this plan would halt the initial North Korean advance. In so doing, it would give the rest of the 24th Infantry Division time to prepare a coherent defense and allow follow-on units of EUSA to deploy. As Major General John Church, the senior

Army officer in Korea, told Smith, “All we need are some men who won’t run when they see tanks.”¹⁴

As the sun lifted in a heavy rain on the morning of 5 July, the men of TF Smith continued their final preparations. At approximately 0700, the lead elements of the North Korean army appeared on the road north of Osan-Ni. Low and squat, a company of T34 tanks moved in a column southward, slowly closing on the hill Smith’s men occupied. As the lead company drew closer, follow-on tanks began to appear out of the rain. Soon, there were over thirty tanks with supporting infantry closing on Smith’s position.¹⁵ For an hour, as the tanks and infantry moved slowly southward along the road, the task force held its fire.

Shortly after 0800, the battle began with Smith’s artillery battery opening fire on the North Koreans at a range of roughly 4,000 yards.¹⁶ At that range, the fire had no impact on the tanks, and the enemy continued his movement in a column formation towards Smith’s infantry positions. Recognizing this first artillery strike against the enemy had neither slowed him down nor forced any kind of tactical deployment, Smith gave new orders to his command. Concerned about both the lack of any kind of defensive response from the tanks and the shortages of antitank ammunition for his recoilless rifles, Smith directed his troops to hold their fire against the enemy’s tanks until they had closed to within 700 yards.¹⁷ At this range, Smith considered it likely that the massed fires of his recoilless rifles would stop the enemy’s tanks.

As the minutes slowly ticked by, the North Korean tank column continued towards Smith’s positions. As the tanks crossed the trigger line, the recoilless rifles, augmented with some of the task forces 2.36-inch rocket launchers, opened fire. While

some guncrews would report direct hits on the lead tank, the 75-millimeter, high-explosive rounds and small rockets lacked the ability to cause any serious damage to the tanks, and they continued their slow, steady movement through the thin line of infantrymen.¹⁸ Exacerbating the ammunition problem was a training problem that further degraded the effectiveness of these weapons. One of the crews failed to properly position its weapon and was rendered combat ineffective after the back blast from the first round blew mud into the weapon and completely fouled it. This gun could only reengage after being completely cleaned.¹⁹ Ultimately, this gun crew enjoyed one of the successes of the initial engagement when it was able to strike one of the tanks in its tread, forcing it to halt. For most of the recoilless rifle crews, however, the engagement consisted of an exchange of ineffective fire, as the T34 tanks returned fire without significant effects.

As the tanks continued their passage through Smith's lines, they were engaged by a howitzer that Smith had positioned to serve as an antitank gun. This weapon, with all six HEAT rounds that Smith's troops possessed, was able to engage the tanks after they passed through the fields of fire of the recoilless rifles. As the lead tanks entered the range fan of the howitzer, it rapidly fired two HEAT rounds that damaged the two lead tanks. This success was also short-lived, however, as the third tank in the column slewed around the damaged tanks and then engaged and disabled the gun.²⁰ With this action accomplished, the tanks continued south towards the remainder of the artillery battery. Seeing the tanks approach, the surviving guns opened fire with high-explosive ammunition that simply bounced off the heavy armor of the T34s.²¹ One tank had a track broken by a direct hit from one of the howitzers, but the rest of the tanks continued to move. The continuing appearance of undamaged tanks scared the artillerymen, and at

one point, a number of them deserted their pieces.²² By 1015, the last elements of this lead tank column had completed their passage through the rear of Smith's position, taking with them both the confidence of Smith's men and the majority of his communications as their passage disabled his telephone lines. In return, Smith had been able to stop just four of thirty-three tanks.²³ Cold, wet, scared, and without adequate communications or medical support, Smith's troops could only wait for the next wave of enemy troops to approach their position. The wait would not be long.

By 1115, the lead elements of the North Korean infantry came into the task force's view. The *16th and 18th Regiments*, mounted in trucks with an estimated strength of 4,000 soldiers, formed a column almost six miles long.²⁴ With a tank platoon in the lead, this force moved along without any indication that it was even aware of Smith's presence along its route of march. As the enemy column closed within indirect-fire range, one of Smith's platoon sergeants called for artillery. With the task force relying on wire communications that had been disabled by the North Korean tanks, no fire support was available.²⁵ Requests for 4.2-inch fire also went unanswered, and the North Koreans continued to move to within a 81-millimeter mortar range.²⁶ At a range of approximately 1,000 yards, the task force's 8-millimeter mortars and heavy machine guns opened fire on the column's lead elements.²⁷

In their movement southward the North Korean infantry appeared to be conducting an administrative movement instead of a tactical one.²⁸ This administrative orientation rapidly changed with Smith's first barrage. Stunned by the combination of heavy machine-gun and mortar fire, the North Koreans rapidly began deploying. Using the supporting tank platoon as the foundation for a base of fire, the North Korean infantry

began to maneuver against Smith's position.²⁹ For the next hour, the enemy attempted to penetrate Smith's position in an apparent effort to determine the strength of the roadblock he faced.³⁰ Coincidental with this, the enemy began a steadily increasing volume of artillery and mortar fire against Smith's positions.³¹ As the enemy tanks drew to within a few hundred yards and enemy machine-gun and indirect fire raked his positions, Smith recognized his tactical situation was no longer tenable and ordered a withdrawal of his forces south towards Chonan.³² The time was approximately 1430 hours, and Smith was quitting the field in an effort to save his soldiers.

TF Smith delayed the passage of the enemy's first tank column for a few minutes and his infantry column for a few hours. In the first test against the North Koreans, the US Army demonstrated a number of critical weaknesses, including ineffective antiarmor weapons (the failure to field EUSA with sufficient quantities of 105-millimeter HEAT or 3.5-inch rocket launchers ensured that Smith's men would not be able to destroy enemy tanks in any number), poor communications, and a low level of proficiency with a number of its crew-served weapons. Equally significant were the demonstrated weaknesses in both basic soldier skills and leadership. None of this was a surprise; all of these weaknesses were known to anyone who had read EUSA's inspector general reports before Smith's troops ever deployed. Despite these weaknesses, however, Smith's command enjoyed one advantage over those that would follow it to Korea--it was a relatively homogeneous group with its infantry soldiers coming from a single regiment and its artillerymen coming from a single battalion.

The geography of Japan continued to conspire against the 24th Infantry Division. Its relative proximity to the Korean Peninsula meant it would be the first division to

commit all three of its regiments to the fight. As the division's 21st Infantry Regiment was attempting to delay with its First Battalion, its 19th Infantry Regiment was continuing to deploy from Japan. As the regiment's deployment continued, and the North Koreans continued their southward movement, the commanding general of the 24th Infantry Division decided to employ the as yet untried 19th Infantry Regiment along the Kum River, a naturally occurring defensive obstacle.³³ Arrayed with the 34th Infantry Regiment to its west and the 2nd ROK Infantry Division to its east, the regiment concentrated its forces along the Choci'won-Taejon Road, the primary north-south road across the Kum.

Like its counterparts in the 24th Infantry Division, the 19th Regiment was organized into two battalions. It was also understrength, undertrained, and inadequately equipped. Containing just 2,276 soldiers, many of whom were replacements torn from the 1st Cavalry and 7th Infantry divisions, the regiment occupied positions that extended across a frontage of approximately thirty miles.³⁴ Such a broad frontage, with the lack of the doctrinal third rifle battalion with its supporting weapons company, meant that the 19th Infantry would be compelled to disperse the majority of its combat power across an exceptionally broad frontage and would only be able to deploy in depth along the Taejon Road. The danger here lay in the regiment's forward positions being bypassed by the enemy. Once this was accomplished, the North Koreans would then fix it in position by establishing positions to the rear of the regiments. For an experienced regiment with well-trained troops this would be an undesirable tactical situation. For an inexperienced regiment, organized into strange teams positioned on strange terrain, this situation was untenable.

As the 19th Regiment prepared defensive positions on 15 July, the North Korean *3rd Infantry Division* probed the defense and conducted reconnaissance to support a forced crossing of the Kum River.³⁵ Throughout the day, the North Koreans continued preparations, and just before dark the enemy began his first crossing with a combination of tanks and infantry.³⁶ The first attempt did not succeed, as it was made opposite one of the companies of the 19th.³⁷ Where a company was able to mass its direct and indirect fires against observable targets and without the need for communications with adjacent or supporting units, it was able to hold its own against the enemy's probing attacks. The unfortunate side effect of this, however, was the ability of the enemy to determine the location of individual positions and weapons. At approximately 0300 hours on the morning of 16 July, the enemy capitalized on this and opened fire with a heavy artillery barrage. Coincidental with that, the enemy began a large and successful crossing of the Kum River. Using the artillery barrage to fix the 19th Infantry, it penetrated the line through one of the large gaps that had been created through the assignment of such a wide frontage to the regiment.³⁸

The successful penetration of the 19th Infantry's positions gave the North Koreans the ability to occupy the high terrain that ran roughly perpendicular to the river, but through the depth of the 19th's positions along the Choci'wan-Taejon Road. This placed the enemy on the high ground overlooking the First Battalion. In response to this threat, the battalion organized a counterattack using the available headquarters troops.³⁹ Though this attack was successful, the battalion executive officer and adjutant were both killed.⁴⁰ At a time when officer leadership was critical, the loss of two relatively senior officers from the battalion served to further undermine the capabilities of the regiment.

During this action, the situation of the 19th Regiment continued to erode. The First Battalion had suffered the loss of key leaders, the adjacent 34th Regiment had buckled under enemy pressure, and the 19th Regiment itself had been both penetrated and had lost contact with much of the enemy. Additionally, the enemy had succeeded in establishing a significant roadblock on the Choci'won-Taejon Road, which served to cut off the 19th from the rest of the division.⁴¹

The appearance of the North Korean roadblock meant that the 19th Regiment was isolated and that the roadblock had to be reduced to allow the unit to withdraw to subsequent positions. The initial attempts to reduce the roadblock were ineffective, as the soldiers conducting the attempted reduction were “disorganized and apathetic.”⁴² In an effort to instill some purpose in the soldiers in contact, the regimental commander, Colonel Guy S. Meloy, moved to the roadblock and began directing the efforts of the troops. In so doing, he was wounded by the enemy, and command of the regiment passed to the commander of the First Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Otto Winstead.⁴³ In the course of a few hours, the First Battalion lost both its battalion commander (the battlefield replacement for Colonel Meloy) and battalion executive officer, as well as its adjutant. Additionally, the regiment lost its commander. Leadership, already in short supply, became a premium as the situation continued to deteriorate.

Under these conditions, the order was given for the 19th Regiment to withdraw south towards Taejon.⁴⁴ Shortly after this order was given, the regimental radio truck was destroyed by enemy fire.⁴⁵ The regiment, still arrayed over a thirty-mile front, now lacked effective communications with all of its subordinate elements and its higher

headquarters. No wire communications had been emplaced and the loss of the radio truck now rendered the regiment incapable of providing effective command and control.

As the First Battalion attempted to withdraw, it dashed itself against the roadblock and suffered increasing casualties, one of whom was Lieutenant Colonel Winstead.⁴⁶ As repeated attempts to force the roadblock failed, it became necessary to bypass the block by moving across the ridgelines adjacent to it. Dismounted soldiers who bypassed the roadblock by moving cross-country over the steep Korean hills realized in no uncertain terms what a lack of physical preparation for the rigors of combat actually meant. As they continued their movement cross-country, mounted elements continued to try and force the roadblock from the north while other 24th Division elements attempted to reduce it from the south. By the time the attempt was abandoned, the First Battalion had lost virtually all its vehicles, and the 52d Field Artillery had lost eight 105-millimeter howitzers and most of its equipment.⁴⁷

More telling than the loss of equipment, however, was the loss of life among the regiment's officer leadership. Of the thirty-four officers in the regimental headquarters, service, medical, and First Battalion headquarters companies, seventeen were killed or missing in action, a loss of 50 percent.⁴⁸ The most heavily engaged company, Company C of the First Battalion, suffered 122 casualties against a strength of 171, or 71 percent.⁴⁹ The casualty rates for the regiment and its various attachments ranged from 14 to 71 percent with the total casualty rate for the regiment and its attachments approaching 20 percent.⁵⁰ Such casualty rates are indicative of units that are not adequately prepared for combat.

The 19th Regiment was the last of the regiments of the 24th Division to deploy from Japan to Korea. It had given up some soldiers to fill other units in the division and was a recipient of a percentage of EUSA replacements. As such, it deployed with line companies that lacked the cohesion that the 1950 edition of FM 100-5, *Operations*, so clearly stated as important in building battlefield value. The results of this shortcoming were demonstrated throughout the 19th Regiment's ordeal on the Kum River line, most dramatically when it attempted to reduce the North Korean roadblock established to the regiment's rear. The effects of this lack of cohesion were greatly magnified as the regiment began suffering the loss of key leaders, notably field-grade officers. The regiment lacked the ability to rapidly adjust to changing leaders, and the loss of communications with subordinate and higher headquarters alike served to further hinder the withdrawal. Finally, a lack of both adequate physical and tactical training when in Japan, which includes both the regiment's original cadre and those replacements received prior to deploying to Korea, served to reduce the effectiveness of the regiment. The failure to properly allocate manpower resources and prepare the regiment for combat while in Japan served to ensure its ineffectiveness once it was committed.

While the 24th Infantry Division continued to shatter itself against the North Koreans in an effort to retard their inexorable movement south, two more EUSA divisions were deployed from Japan to Korea. The 25th Infantry and 1st Cavalry each found themselves on the peninsula and in combat with very little time to prepare for the ordeal that was to come.

In the 25th Infantry Division one regiment had been exempt from the requirement to transfer soldiers to the 24th Infantry Division as part of the crash program to fill its

rifle battalions. The 24th Infantry Regiment, the last of the Army's segregated infantry formations, not only did not transfer soldiers to other units, it also had the advantage of being the only regiment in Japan that was organized into the three battalions that contemporary doctrine required.⁵¹ Theoretically, this gave the 24th Infantry one advantage its sister regiments did not enjoy: greater cohesion within the regiment. As the largest infantry regiment in EUSA, the 24th would find itself committed to combat just four days after the collapse of the Kum River line and the withdrawal of the 19th Infantry.⁵²

The 24th Infantry committed its Third Battalion and an attached platoon of the 77th Engineer Company to an attack against the North Koreans at the town of Yechon on 20 July.⁵³ This attack was a violent affair that culminated with the withdrawal of the North Koreans and the occupation of Yechon on 21 July, followed by the transfer of responsibility for the town to the ROK 18th Regiment.⁵⁴ While this action was taking place, the remainder of the regiment was stationed in the vicinity of Kumch'on, located astride the Taejon-Taegu Road.⁵⁵ With the fall of Taejon, the 25th Infantry Division headquarters and the 24th Infantry Regiment were moved to Sangju.⁵⁶ At Sangju, the regiment would see its first substantial action and would demonstrate a manner of performance that is still debated. During the period of 22 to 23 July, the 24th Infantry was committed to combat in the vicinity of Ponghwang Mountain, roughly twenty miles northwest of Kumch'on. For much of this period, the regiment fought with all three of its battalions under its own control. Thus, at Sangju it is possible to assess the performance of the regiment as a whole.

At Sangju, the 24th Infantry initially opposed the North Korean *15th Infantry Division*. Raised after the war had started, this division represented one of the less-capable units in the NPKA as much of its infantry strength consisted of conscripts from occupied ROK territory. In the 24th Infantry's initial attack against this division, the regiment committed its Second Battalion, supported by the ROK 17th Regiment, against an enemy force estimated at between sixty and one hundred soldiers. The concept of the attack was relatively simple: the ROK regiment would support the attack by fire from its current location and the Second Battalion would move roughly five miles from its starting point to the objective. The movement would be dismounted and conducted with companies in column. From the assault position, the battalion would assault and then secure the objective. As the battalion moved through restrictive terrain near its assault position, its lead company came under enemy fire. Lacking effective communications due to radio failure, the attack began to stall as the lead company commander was unable to effectively direct the action of his troops. As other officers moved forward in an effort to ascertain the situation, noncommissioned officer leadership in the battalion began to break down. As a result, men began to desert the field and move back to the safety of their original route of march.⁵⁷ Lacking effective leadership, reliable communications, and positive soldier initiative, the attack ultimately stalled and the battalion was withdrawn.

The breakdown in radio communications meant that the battalion headquarters lacked a clear picture of what was actually happening with the Second Battalion's attack. With the loss of radio contact with the Second Battalion, the regimental commander elected to move forward to determine the tactical situation. His initial contact was with a

group of panicked soldiers from the battalion who told him that one company had been destroyed and that the battalion was surrounded on three sides. Shortly thereafter, the battalion commander and several staff officers came upon the regimental commander-- attempting to flee the alleged enemy encirclement.⁵⁸ The regiment's casualties in this attack consisted of twenty wounded with none killed. The next day, the ROK 17th Regiment conducted a successful attack of this objective, capturing some thirty soldiers.⁵⁹ In its first test, the Second Battalion had failed to secure the objective, despite the fact that it had numerical superiority and a second regiment in support. A lack of effective leadership and troop confidence, both the results of effective training programs, led to a panic when communications were lost while in contact.

As the regiment continued to conduct combat operations, essentially occupying a series of blocking positions astride the roads west of Sangju, discipline problems continued within the Second Battalion. Over its first month of combat, the Second Battalion lost all seventeen of its .30-caliber machine guns. Additionally, it lost one-half of its .50-caliber machine guns. Most combat soldiers abandoned all their personal equipment, save their weapons and the clothes on their backs. Finally, straggling and deserting positions became a major problem throughout the battalion. In the case of Company E, all but four soldiers abandoned the company's position within a battalion perimeter.⁶⁰ Battlefield discipline had never been effectively developed during training in Japan, and the battalion's soldiers never fully learned the simple truth of combat: a man's survival depends as much on his comrades as it does on himself.

The First Battalion also experienced its share of discipline problems. Attempting to move onto higher ground, the battalion was attacked by the North Koreans. Though

most of the battalion was able to hold its position and defeat this attack, much of Company A had deserted its positions in the face of the enemy. The battalion commander, who had assumed the position only nine days earlier, noted that the company had abandoned two 81-millimeter mortars, a radio, a .50-caliber machine gun, ammunition, a 3.5-inch rocket launcher, and other equipment.⁶¹ Similarly, the Third Battalion panicked on one occasion and fled leaving, twelve .30-caliber machine guns, three .50-caliber machine guns, three 81-millimeter mortars, eight 60-millimeter mortars, four 3.5-inch rocket launchers, and some 102 rifles.⁶² Soldiers fleeing included officers, noncommissioned officers, and enlisted men alike. One of these officers included a lieutenant commanding a company who was sentenced to death (the president ultimately commuted the sentence to twenty years confinement at hard labor) for deserting his position and then refusing to return.⁶³

The 24th Infantry Regiment deployed with a great theoretical advantage: cohesion among its members. As events unfolded in combat, it became apparent that this theoretical advantage did not really exist. Cohesion did exist, but it did not present itself in battle. Rather, it presented itself in the various means to avoid battle: en masse straggling, desertion, disposing of the key tools of war. That this breakdown in discipline was able to happen is a reflection of poor leadership at the platoon and company levels. In simple terms, leadership within the 24th Infantry Regiment was weakest at the levels where it needed to be strongest--at the noncommissioned officer level. This weakness was partially a legacy of the unit's World War II role. Assigned to the Pacific theater as a separate infantry regiment, the 24th Infantry's wartime service was limited to garrison duties on Guadalcanal, Saipan, Tinian, and Okinawa.⁶⁴ These assignments were made

after major combat operations were completed, with the regiment's combat role restricted to small-scale "mopping-up" actions. As a result, the regiment's junior leadership and soldiers never had the opportunity to develop the combat leadership skills their counterparts in more active regiments developed. This weakness remained with the unit after demobilization as soldiers elected to remain with the regiment instead of returning to civilian life. From such weak noncommissioned officer leadership sprang the problems of panic, straggling, the willful abandonment of equipment, and desertion. The peacetime competitive tour program provided officers with a great opportunity to exercise command in peacetime and under benign conditions. That same program, however, failed to present officers with the opportunity to develop the skills they would require in combat by denying company commanders and battalion staff officers alike the chance to train with their units. The results of that failure became evident in the performance of the 24th Infantry.

Similarly, credible peacetime training opportunities for the regiment's soldiers were limited. The poor performance of many members of the 24th Infantry was simply the result of inadequate training. A lack of effective training in the collective nature of combat meant that panic set in. In an environment in which there exists weak leadership and soldier panic, the result is going to be predictable--a lack of battlefield efficiency. The relatively low battlefield casualties, roughly 15 percent of its deployed strength, of the 24th Infantry during this period, as compared to the other regiments in combat, indicate that there was frequently a pronounced lack of effort by many members of the regiment.⁶⁵

While the Far East Command had planned on deploying the 1st Cavalry Division to Korea as part of the commitment of ground forces, that plan had originally envisioned the 1st Cavalry deploying to the rear of the North Koreans in an offensive role.⁶⁶ In concert with a counterattack by the other EUSA and ROK elements in Korea, the division would be used to crush the North Korean army by applying pressure in two directions simultaneously. The combination of direct pressure from all the units and the interruption of the enemy's lines of communications would render it incapable of further offensive action and would compel the enemy's surrender. The repeated failures of the 24th Infantry Division and the continuing erosion of combat power within the ROKA forced a change in this concept. As a result, the mission of the 1st Cavalry Division was changed from offensive to defensive. To that end, the division was deployed to Korea between 12 and 18 July 1950.⁶⁷

The division that deployed, however, was different in character from the division that had existed just ten days earlier. The stripping out of 750 noncommissioned officers meant that most companies or batteries deployed with only one senior noncommissioned officer who had any experience with the unit. Additionally, the division received 1,450 fresh replacements before its deployment--100 of whom were prior residents of the Eighth Army stockade.⁶⁸ This meant that the division's regiments would occupy their initial positions with noncommissioned officers with very little experience working with either their officers or their soldiers. Additionally, it meant that a number of the soldiers had a marked propensity for undisciplined behavior. For the soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division, these weaknesses would serve to further undermine its existing strength and training shortcomings.

On 22 July the 1st Cavalry Division was committed to battle with the 8th Cavalry Regiment, defending positions in the vicinity of Yongdong, and the headquarters and the Second Battalion of the 7th Cavalry Regiment, occupying positions further east near Kum'chon.⁶⁹ During the night of 25 July, the 7th Cavalry received erroneous word that an adjacent unit, the 27th Infantry Regiment, had been penetrated. The perception that the regiment now possessed an assailable flank caused the 7th Cavalry to order a night withdrawal southward to new, more secure positions.⁷⁰

The 7th Cavalry was a unit that had been filled with replacements prior to its departing Japan. This combination of inexperienced soldiers and night movement proved difficult to control. As the Second Battalion began its movement, it rapidly lost all sense of organization. While the situation with the 27th Infantry was not as serious as the 7th Cavalry believed, there were North Korean forces operating in the regiment's area. Just a few minutes into the withdrawal, the North Koreans opened fire.⁷¹ This fire, while initially not effective, led to panic within the battalion. In some cases, this loss of confidence led to soldiers not firing their weapons for fear that their individual positions would be compromised.⁷² Such action only served to further degrade the situation by denying the battalion the ability to establish an effective base of fire to either kill the enemy or force his withdraw from the positions he occupied. In other cases, it led to the wholesale desertion of positions.⁷³

This abandonment of positions led to further chaos within the regiment, as fleeing soldiers became interspersed with groups of 24th Infantry Division soldiers attempting to withdraw southward, ROK soldiers who had been separated from their units, displaced civilians, and enemy soldiers.⁷⁴ In their panic, the Second Battalion abandoned 14

machine guns, 9 radios, 120 M1 rifles, 26 M1 carbines, 7 Browning automatic rifles (the primary means for a rifle squad to provide a base of fire), and six 60-millimeter mortars.⁷⁵ Equally distressing were the 119 soldiers listed as missing in action as a result of the panic.⁷⁶ To the extent that “bright spots” existed within the battalion, they were found in the actions of Major Bill Witherspoon and the Company H commander, Captain Melbourne C. Chandler. These officers alone were successful in creating some kind of order within the battalion and in keeping some positive control over the unit.⁷⁷ Witherspoon had the difficult task of organizing fleeing members of the battalion into company groups in the darkness. Ill armed and afraid, the risk of contagious panic was present in the hastily assembled groups.⁷⁸

A failure to correctly assess the tactical situation in the sector of an adjacent unit by the 7th Cavalry Regiment had led to a poor decision--the decision to displace one of its two battalions and the regimental headquarters. A failure to establish positive control over the battalion during the displacement and the failure to properly respond to enemy contact by establishing a base of fire and then maneuvering to destroy the enemy had led to panic within much of the battalion. The result was the loss of enough material to equip a company and the needless loss of almost a company's worth of soldiers as missing-in-action. Such a result was predicted in FM 100-5, *Operations*. Once again, as was so often the case throughout July, inexperienced leadership led to both poor decisions and poor execution by soldiers, who lacked confidence in themselves and in their leaders (indeed, it was such a lack of confidence and discipline that gave rise to a range of postwar allegations, to include atrocities at No Gun-Ri). The result in either case was the further southward movement of EUSA's units and a further contraction of EUSA's lines

as the command closed on the Naktong River and prepared the line of resistance that would become known as the ‘Pusan Perimeter.’”

No army in contact possesses the ability to instantly change from one that is ineffective to one that possesses a high degree of effectiveness. EUSA was no exception to that rule. The performance of the 21st, 19th, 24th Infantry, and 7th Cavalry regiments was very similar to the performance of the 34th and 35th Infantry and 5th and 8th Cavalry regiments. Of the nine understrength regiments that initially deployed to Korea, only one regiment, the 27th Infantry, demonstrated a relatively high degree of effectiveness against the enemy. The magnitude of EUSA’s performance problems is found in its casualty listing for July 1950. In twenty-six days of combat, EUSA suffered over 7,604 casualties.⁷⁹ These included 1,884 dead, 2,695 wounded, 523 missing (119 from the Second Battalion of the 7th Cavalry alone), and 901 reported as captured. Over 3,600 of these combat losses were within the 24th Infantry Division.⁸⁰ Not surprisingly, most of these casualties occurred in the last two weeks of the month when the 19th, 24th Infantry, and 7th Cavalry regiments were committed and broken in their initial engagements.

As July slipped into August, EUSA began to capitalize on the few advantages it enjoyed. Unlike the North Koreans, EUSA had relatively secure supply lines that became shorter and shorter as the army collapsed southward. On 4 August EUSA created a new defensive line, the so-called ‘Pusan Perimeter.’⁸¹ This line, manned by a combination of ROK and US Army units, would serve to provide EUSA with interior lines of communication coupled with a secure port. Additionally, EUSA was now receiving replacements at a rate greater than it was taking casualties.⁸² As the enemy’s

strength continued to erode through air strikes and EUSA and ROK army action, EUSA's strength, both in troops and in combat vehicles, began to increase.⁸³ Though this increased strength was critical in allowing EUSA to maintain its hold on Korea, it was insufficient to allow EUSA to break the continuing attack of the North Koreans.

The newly arriving units, the 5th Infantry and 29th Infantry regiments from Hawaii and Japan and the 2nd Infantry Division from Fort Lewis, suffered many of the same problems as the other infantry formations in Korea. The crash program to fill vacancies in existing tables of organization meant that untrained troops, to include Korean enlistees who the ROK army was unable to absorb, and inexperienced leaders would be put into infantry units.⁸⁴ As these units were committed to combat, the results were once again predictable. The slow grinding war would continue. The EUSA would continue to take casualties, but, in concert with the ROK and British Armies and the US Marine Corps, would maintain its hold on the Naktong River line.⁸⁵ The NPKA, operating with extended supply lines and subjected to both effective air attack and an increasing volume of direct and indirect fires, would never muster the strength to shatter the Naktong River line and achieve its strategic objectives. A stalemate would set in with each side grappling for a way to break the other's hold over it.

The cost of this combat is again told in EUSA's casualty rates. The killed in action figure for the month of August was 1,312 with an additional 3,879 wounded and over 6,500 disease, nonbattle injury casualties.⁸⁶ This figure, not including missing in action or confirmed captured, totals over 11,600 soldiers. Additionally, this figure does not include the reliefs for cause of platoon, company, battalion, or regimental commanders that occurred during the month. Though not casualties, these reliefs served

to further erode soldier confidence and further served to prevent the forming of solid chains of command at lower echelons, as replacements frequently were “pushed up” into positions rather than “pushed down” from higher echelons.⁸⁷ The effect of this on the losing unit was generally as pronounced as a battle loss. The practical lessons and mutual trust that had been developed within the unit disappeared, when the officer moved up to the next position.

Through mid-September EUSA’s operational and tactical situation remained essentially unchanged. The command was able to maintain its positions and, indeed, began to see an increase in unit efficiency as surviving soldiers both learned the hard lessons of combat and became conditioned to the environment. Despite this improvement, however, EUSA casualty rates remained high. Killed in action figures for the first two weeks of September are 1,578 soldiers, with another 10,300 as either wounded in action or disease, non-battle injury casualties.⁸⁸ An improvement in capabilities was developing, but it would be many more months before EUSA would consistently demonstrate the tactical skill, battlefield discipline, and competent leadership that sustained and successful combat requires.

Improvements in strength and skill notwithstanding, EUSA maintained its defensive posture until the Far East Command was able to execute OPERATION Chromite, the amphibious landing at Inchon with the X Corps on 15 September.⁸⁹ This operation, conducted by the 1st Marine and 7th Infantry Divisions, provided the ground attack against the NKPA that led to its collapse.⁹⁰ This collapse established the conditions EUSA required for both its breakout of the Pusan Perimeter and subsequent attack north through the shattered NKPA towards Seoul.

Like its EUSA counterparts, the 7th Infantry Division suffered many of the same leadership and training deficiencies that resulted from wholesale personnel transfers. Prior to its becoming the Far East Command replacement division (and absorbing replacements flowing into EUSA), the 7th Infantry Division had provided over 130 officers and 1,500 enlisted men to its sister divisions.⁹¹ Even with the replacements it received, to include some 8,637 Korean draftees, the division was still short 416 officers when it landed at Inchon.⁹² The success the division enjoyed at Inchon and Seoul was largely the result of two factors: an infusion of exceptionally well-trained noncommissioned officers from the Army's infantry and field artillery training centers, and the favorable correlation of forces that such a deep operation created.⁹³

In the seventy-two days that elapsed between its first enemy contact and the Inchon landing, EUSA's small units demonstrated a series of serious weaknesses at every level, from the rifle squad through regiment. These weaknesses had their genesis in a peacetime approach to training, leadership, and maintenance that did not realistically consider the requirements of infantry and combined-arms combat, irrespective of location. Once combat was joined, both the Army, in general, and EUSA, in particular, searched for short-term solutions to meet the requirements of immediate crises. Though both were ultimately successful in meeting these requirements, the price paid was high. Operational success was ultimately achieved by EUSA's holding the Naktong River line long enough to allow Operation Chromite to take place, but the cost of this success was repeated tactical failure. The histories of the 5th, 9th, 19th, 21st, 23rd, 24th, 27th, 34th, and 35 Infantry Regiments and the 5th, 7th, and 8th Cavalry Regiments bear testimony to the effects of inadequate training, substandard maintenance, and poor tactical leadership

of soldiers in combat. The killed (which total 23 percent of the total US Army killed in action for the entire war), the maimed, the missing, and the captured are figures on casualty lists of these units, but they are more than that.⁹⁴ They are the currency by which battlefield outcomes in Korea were bought and paid for in the long hot summer of 1950.

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CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the Eighth Army's ten-week ordeal are well known. Despite repeated tactical setbacks, General Walton Walker's army was ultimately able to hold the perimeter. In so doing, conditions were set that allowed General MacArthur to successfully launch Operation Chromite--the operational maneuver that severed the ground lines of communication between the NKPA's attempt to break through the Pusan Perimeter in the south and its supply base in North Korea.

The causes of the Eighth Army's tactical setbacks have also been examined in detail. Clearly, there is no single cause for the Eighth Army's initial failures. The causes are many and in some cases, subtle.

The Truman administration must bear much of the blame. Its culpability is found in two areas. First, the administration's decision to reverse its own "security perimeter" policy meant that the Army was committed to combat in an area where combat had never been contemplated. This policy change meant that the planning and training for combat in Korea had never been undertaken. Secondly, the combination of an aerial-delivered nuclear weapons national strategy coupled with the perceived need to keep defense spending down to the lowest level possible meant that the Army would operate with serious equipment problems. The Army was initially beaten by tanks that had first seen combat in 1941.¹ The means to defeat these tanks had already been developed--the M26 Pershing tank and the 3.5-inch antitank rocket.² Congressional funding denied these weapons to the troops who needed them the most. The Army knew that a tank cannon cannot fire more than one round without oil in the recuperator.³ Despite this, the Army

could not buy the oil needed to service its existing tanks--the low appropriations of the 80th Congress, acting on the request of the president, precluded them from doing so. The Army knew that tank engines required fanbelts. Again, the Army could not buy them. The results of these known but unsatisfied requirements included over 6,000 casualties and the loss of tanks when the Army could ill afford those losses.⁴ These were needless personnel and equipment losses that stem solely from the conscious decision of the political masters to place economics above soldiers' lives.

The Department of the Army bears some responsibility for the Army's initial Korean performance. Its responsibility is found in two distinct arenas--strategy, and manning and training. The Army adopted the prevailing wisdom of the time--it would not be capable of immediate action in the event of a crisis, but it would be able to meet its obligations after a long period of mobilization and preparation. The service recognized the potential for a "war of containment."⁵ It opted, however, not to prepare itself for such an event. This error was magnified by the spending decisions the Army made when it received its appropriations. Stretched thin, the Army tried economizing. Among the economy measures introduced were the cutting back of unit strengths and of both the amount and the quality of training it provided its soldiers.⁶ The results of these decisions were understaffed, undertrained pools of men who held the title "soldier," but were imbued with few of the essential qualifications. The resultant effects were further magnified by Operation Flushout and the effort to fill units on a crash basis.⁷ Failing to learn the bitter lessons of replacement operations in World War II, the Army again sent inadequately prepared strangers to meet their fate in close combat. That the casualty rates were high should be no surprise to anyone. Combat is not a pastime for amateurs--it

is the arena in which only well-trained, well-led, well-disciplined, cohesive units can enter and be reasonably sure to prevail. As an institution, the Army knew that. Despite that knowledge, the Army willfully created hollow units that lacked training, leadership, and discipline. The effects of combat on those units are well documented.

The EUSA itself also deserves some of the blame. The peacetime practices that relegated tactical training to a low and underresourced priority resulted in an Army that was ill prepared--physically, mentally, or spiritually--for combat in Korea.⁸ The results of the EUSA's years of tactical neglect are found in the combat histories of virtually all of the infantry regiments that it deployed from Japan to Korea. The harsh reality is that the performance of the 21st, 19th, and 24th Infantry, and 7th Cavalry Regiments was not unique; such performance was typical of virtually every infantry regiment deployed. The performance of these regiments should not come as any surprise--the Eighth Army's own Inspector General indicated that he was fully aware of the low level of preparedness within its formations.⁹ Likewise, the generally weak leadership that was found throughout EUSA's lower echelons must be considered a contributing factor.

What, then, are the relevant lessons from the summer of 1950? They are the same lessons of every war--that training, discipline, and leadership are not optional and that these need to form the foundation of each "peacetime" day. Further, training must be *relevant*. Each day the Army spends teaching soldiers how to interact with each other and their families in a garrison environment is a day the Army fails to train soldiers to work interdependently on the battlefield. In 1949 and 1950 "Troop Information and Education" and the requirements of "special duty" (both real and imagined) robbed units of training opportunities.¹⁰ In 2002 similar programs, such as "Consideration of Others,"

combine with “borrowed military manpower” (both real and imagined) to rob units of opportunities to practice the individual and collective combat skills.¹¹ The irony of this is found in effective collective training. The same interpersonal skills that we are trying to impart in classroom (respect and trust) are imparted, much more effectively, in the field.

Additionally, the Army needs to define the relevant skills the soldier requires on the battlefield. In August 1950 newly created infantrymen learned to fire the infantry’s basic weapon--the M1 Garand--from the fantail of troopships en route to Korea.¹² In the event of a sudden contingency in 2002, how many newly created “cyber-soldiers” of “digital formations” will learn to operate the basic automation systems in the back of a C-141 or C-17 en route to the battlefield? The simple reality is that modern warfare requires a range of skills and the Army is failing, as an institution, if it does not make critical skills training its highest priority. To prevent a repeat of 1950, the Army needs to adjust its priorities and define the soldier’s mission essential task list--those skills that, irrespective of military occupational specialty or branch--the soldier must know to be an effective *contributor* to his unit’s battlefield operations. Officers *must* be considered as part of this process. This means that plans for the development of officers must recognize the time and experience required for an individual to acquire and practice those skills. These experiences flow from the combination of comprehensive professional schooling coupled with repeated assignments with troops at the platoon and company level.

Victory is not gained merely by appearing on the battlefield--TF Smith is evidence of that. Victory is gained by appearing on the battlefield with the requisite training, discipline, equipment, and leadership to overmatch whatever capabilities the

enemy has and then to bend him to the nation's will. This can only happen when the nation's senior leadership has a clear and relevant vision of the Army, when the Congress shares this vision and funds the service to meet its real needs, when the Army adequately trains its forces, and, ultimately, when the Army provides effective and professional leadership at the tactical level.

If the Army can successfully integrate these elements, then it has no real concerns as to its ability to fight and win with no notice anywhere in the world. If the Army cannot successfully integrate and apply them, then the bitter lessons of Korea (and World War II, the Civil War, the War of 1812, and the American Revolution) will be relearned by a new generation of soldiers who should have profited from the lessons of the generations that preceded them.¹³

¹T. R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War: A Study in Un-preparedness* (Dulles: Brasseys, 1998), 67; and Simon Dunston, *Armour of the Korean War* (London: Osprey, 1982), 5. Developed during the Second World War, the Soviet-designed T34 tank gained notoriety as the primary Soviet tank in use at Stalingrad. Implementing a series of design changes throughout the war, the T34/85 represented the final modifications of the design. This tank, with the 8-millimeter high-velocity cannon, formed the foundation of the NKPA armor force during the Korean War. A grim irony for the many soldiers who had to combat this tank was the fact that it had its genesis in the designs of the American designer William Christy. Unable to interest the United States Army in his designs he ultimately provided them to the Soviet Union on the eve of World War II. Throughout the Second World War, the United States was unable to produce a tank that matched its capabilities.

²James A. Huston, *Guns and Butter, Powder and Rice* (Sellinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1989), 29, 78. The Army designed the 3.5-inch rocket launcher during the Second World War and procured a small number of both launchers and rockets. None of these weapons were, however, initially deployed to the Far East Command.

³Dunston, 5.

⁴BG Uzal Ent (PA ARNG, Retired), *Fighting on the Brink* (Paducah: Turner Publishing, 1996), 52, 123; and Blair, *The Forgotten War*, 115. This casualty figure is

based on all casualties: killed in action, wounded in action, missing in action and disease or non-battle injury.

⁵Steven L. Rearden, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense: The Formative Years*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1984), 314.

⁶Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War* (New York: Times Books, 1987), 28; and William T. Bowers, *Black Soldiers, White Army* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1996), 29. The Army's reducing the length of basic combat training in 1948, the elimination of significant amounts of branch specific training in 1949 and the complete absence of branch schooling for new officers in 1950 all contributed to the Army's lack of tactical proficiency during the first ten weeks of the Korean War.

⁷Ent, 42; Bowers, 76; and Donald Knox, *The Korean War: From Pusan to Chosin, An Oral History* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1987), 33. Operation Flushout represented the worst example of crisis decision making in that it returned serious discipline cases to duty. These included soldiers who had been imprisoned for a range of offenses, to include twelve soldiers from the 24th Regiment of the 25th Division who had been imprisoned on heroin use and distribution charges. Lacking the discipline required to serve effectively in garrison, these soldiers were returned to the field and an environment in which indiscipline could be deadly not only to the individual soldier, but also to those soldiers whose misfortunes included serving with them. With few exceptions, these soldiers created more problems than they solved. Their performance validates the concept that soldiers who lack discipline in combat tend to create more problems than they solve.

⁸Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), Chapter 4, esp. pages 78, 81, 87, 94-95; Fehrenbach, 72-84; Blair, Chapter 4, especially pages 102-114; and William Dean, *General Dean's Story* (New York: Viking Press, 1954), 78. Essentially the core argument of this thesis, the unfortunate reality of Korea is that thousands of under-prepared American soldiers were forced into combat under the cruelest possible conditions. The worst decision made during the period 1946-1950 was to cut back on training under the assumption there would be time to compensate for the decision later on. The thousands of dead and wounded soldiers, to include those who suffered extended periods of confinement in prisoner of war camps, ended up as the bill payers for this decision.

⁹Bowers, 77; Ent, 10; Huston, *Guns, Butter, Powder and Rice*, 34; and Blair, 50; all provide clear statements as to the overall state of equipment readiness within the Eighth Army. Personnel strengths and unit effectiveness figures are also found on pg. 97 of Blair's *The Forgotten War*. In this articulation of effectiveness, the FECOM Chief of Staff, LTG Ned Almond rated the units of EUSA as being anywhere from 65 to 84 percent effective on 27 June 1950. The first division to deploy, the 24th Infantry Division represented the lower end of the scale. As a result, it became necessary to withdraw commissioned and noncommissioned officers from the other units of EUSA to

fill critical vacancies within the infantry regiments of the 24th Infantry Division. This created a kind of “death spiral” within the Eighth Army as replacements had to be found to fill the positions of the original augmentees. As a result, the effectiveness ratings of the 7th and 25th Infantry Divisions and the 1st Cavalry division do not reflect their actual capabilities at time of employment as much of the company level leadership within those divisions had been replaced prior to departing Japan.

¹⁰Hastings, 95-96. Hastings quotes Colonel John Michaelis, Commander, 27th (Wolfhounds) Infantry Regiment. Michaelis, in an interview with a reporter from the *Saturday Evening Post* gained notoriety with the following commentary: “In peacetime training, we’ve gone for too damn much falderal. We’ve put too much stress on Information and Education and not enough stress on rifle marksmanship and scouting and patrolling and the organization of a defensive position. These kids of mine have all the guts in the world and I can count on them to fight. But when they started out, they couldn’t shoot. They didn’t know their weapons. . . . They’d spent a lot of time listening to lectures on the difference between communism and Americanism and not enough time crawling on their bellies on maneuvers with live ammunition singing over them. They’d been nursed and coddled, told to drive safely, to buy War Bonds, to give to the Red Cross, to avoid VD, to write home to mother--when somebody ought to have been telling them how to clear a machine gun when it jams.”

¹¹Examples of borrowed military manpower requirements at Fort Hood, Texas, in 2001 included assigning senior noncommissioned officers as gymnasiums attendants, and the use of noncommissioned officers and soldiers as swimming pool lifeguards. Additional requirements included such installation support activities as employing soldiers as crossing guards for school children when units were on a post support cycle and the assignment of soldiers as Directorate of Logistics laborers.

¹²Ent, 129. In this vignette, a rifleman tells of learning how to fire and maintain his weapon en route to Korea. Much of the literature, to include Dean Knox’s *The Korean War* and T. R. Fehrenbach’s *This Kind of War*, recount similar examples of undertrained soldiers learning their weapons upon arrival in Korea. This was particularly true for those soldiers in noncombat arms specialties who found themselves victims of Operation Flushout or those with infantry specialties who had only experienced rudimentary training before being assigned to nontactical duties during occupation duty in Japan.

¹³Roy K. Flint, *America’s First Battles* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1986), 329, passim Chapter 11. In Chapter 11, Flint provides conclusions of America’s first battles in each conflict from the Revolutionary War through the Viet Nam War. Page 339 references two of the key points of this thesis: the effects of doctrine (and not following it) and the impact of political considerations on establishing and maintaining a capable army.

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